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A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S  
HENRY VIII

BY  
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# A STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VIII

## CHAPTER I

### SHAKESPEARE THE POET-HISTORIAN OF ENGLAND

OF the thirty-seven dramas commonly regarded as owing some, if not all, of their composition to William Shakespeare, and which (with the exception of *Pericles*) formed the first collected edition of his plays in the Folio of 1623, ten are denominated Histories, or Chronicle plays. These present leading events in that period of our island's history which commenced in the 13th century, and closed about the middle of the 16th. They are entitled, according to the First Folio: *The life and death of King John. The life and death of King Richard the Second. The First Part of Henry the Fourth, with the Life and Death of Henry Surnamed Hot-Spurre. The Second Part of Henry the Fourth, Containing his Death: and the Coronation of King Henry the Fift. The life of Henry the Fift. The First Part of Henry the Sixt. The second part of Henry the Sixt, with the death of the Good Duke Humfrey. The Third Part of Henry the Sixt, with the death of the Duke of Yorke. The Tragedy of Richard the Third: with the Landing of Earle Richmond, and the Battell at Bosworth Field. The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth.*

## SHAKESPEARE THE POET-

The Playwright was between his twenty-eighth and thirty-fifth years when he was engaged upon the nine earlier historical plays, and at the height of his first enthusiasm. These, however, were not written in chronological order, although they are so arranged in editions of his dramatic works.

The three parts of *Henry VI* were completed before they were followed by *Richard III*, *King John*, *Richard II*, and then *Henry IV*, and its sequel, *Henry V*.

*Henry VIII*, the last one of the series, a description of events the least remote from his own time, was not written until that later period of his life when he had practically retired from the stage. It is, in fact, regarded as his last dramatic work and written in collaboration with a younger author.

From Richard II to Richard III inclusive, every reign is touched upon in a series of eight plays; and with whatever intention, and on whatever model constructed, the whole ten Chronicle plays tell a definite story from which a clear moral may be drawn. We look upon the age of the great armed nobility, with its pretensions and rebellions, which was the soul of England's history under the houses of York and Lancaster.

The progressive narrative begins with the wrong done by the weak King Richard II to his cousin, Henry Bolingbroke, reverting upon his own head. In this play, *Richard II*, are sown the seeds of that internecine strife which blazed finally into the Wars of the Roses.

*King Henry V* diverts for the time being from

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the quarrels at home to the brilliant success of English arms in France under the splendid leadership of the patriot king. But all that Henry V gained was lost in the time of his son and successor, Henry VI. Rivalries and contentions among the nobles shook the nation to its heart. There comes a lull when Edward IV seizes the throne; but the Playwright has set out to prove that a wrong upon a wrong does not make a right. Richard of Gloucester, plotting his way to the crown, plunged England into some of the darkest days of history. When things are at their worst, Shakespeare sends a ray of light through that gloomy tragedy, *Richard III*, and ends upon a hopeful note with Henry of Richmond's success at Bosworth Field. The last lines are in the prophetic vein, which the Dramatist often introduces in his historical plays:

*Richmond:*

'O, now let Richmond and Elizabeth,  
The true succeeders of each royal house,  
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together!  
And let their heirs, God, if thy will be so,  
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,  
With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days!  
Abate the edge of traitors, gracious Lord,  
That would reduce these bloody days again,  
And make poor England weep in streams of blood!  
Let them not live to taste this land's increase,  
That would with treason wound this fair land's peace!  
Now civil wounds are stopp'd, peace lives again:  
That she may long live here, God say amen!'

*King Richard III. V. 5. 29-41.*



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*King John* is in the nature of a Prologue. A strong antipathy to the power of the Church and the authority of Rome is expressed in this play, and the subject is then dropped until it is taken up again in the relation of the struggle between the adherents of the Old Faith and the New in *Henry VIII*, which may be described as the epilogue to the historical dramas.

Shakespeare ends his sequence with the christening of the infant Princess Elizabeth, at the actual dawn of what was the modern era of his own day. 'This little one shall make it holiday', runs the last line of the King's speech, which concludes the play.

In an age very soon after that of the old Miracle and Mystery Plays, which were designed to teach the multitudes Biblical stories and history in the only way they could comprehend them, visually, the Dramatist taught his contemporaries the stirring history of their own land for the past hundred and fifty years, covering a period of the greatest importance and interest in the chronicles of this country since the Norman Conquest.

Shakespeare was a close and accurate copyist wherever the plot of his drama was founded on historic fact as set forth by an historian. But with the alchemy of his genius he transformed the sober narratives of Holinshed, Hall, and Cavendish into a moving pageant of that colourful epoch. The imagination of the Poet clothed the dry facts with an inspiring splendour, a nobility, and moving tragedy which metamorphosed them and imbued them with human interest.

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In his facile blank verse, Shakespeare has presented to us, more vividly than any erudite historian quoting chronicles could have succeeded in doing, the unswerving trend of political history as England slowly emerged from the slough of the Dark Ages towards the light of the Renaissance and the Golden Age, of which he, himself, was the brightest star.

From King John to Henry VIII, from Magna Carta to the Reformation, the poet-historian has sung an immortal epic of the English nation, having for its dominant note the passing of feudalism and the rise of national union and prosperity.

Heine fairly estimates and sums up the historical value of Shakespeare's Chronicle plays:

‘The great Briton,’ he wrote, ‘is not only a poet but an historian: he wields not only the dagger of Melpomene, but the still sharper stylus of Clio. In this respect he is like the earliest writers of history, who also knew no difference between poetry and history, and so gave us not merely a nomenclature of things done, or a dusty herbarium of events, but who enlightened truth with song, and in whose song was heard only the voice of truth.’

There are blots indeed on the fair pages of these dramatised histories. The misrepresentation of the character of Joan of Arc, the La Pucelle of *Henry VI* (if he is responsible for it, of which there is some doubt); the overdrawn portrait of King Richard III, and the strong prejudice shown against the French in the French wars, reveal a bias on the part of the Poet. His partisanship also tended to

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exaggeration in the opposite direction. Shakespeare created an almost legendary hero in his Henry V out of material which fell far short of this ideal.

The Dramatist chose an enormous stage on which to draft his scenes. He used all England, and sometimes France, as a background for those characters whose names stand out from the pages of history; and also for the lesser folk, the yeomen and common soldiers, who were even then, as now, drawn from a class which formed the backbone of England.

There is little definite plot, such as is usually demanded in a drama, to be discerned in any of the Chronicle plays themselves. The action flows on relentlessly to its inevitable end.

In the broader sense there can be no deviation from the actualities of history, but many instances show that the Playwright intentionally violated the order of time. Yet so far from introducing confusion into history thereby, he has really simplified it into its moral elements. In transposing certain minor events, and rearranging the actions of some of his selected historical characters, he has made them reflect more fully their real import and nature, and is enabled to develop his narrative rapidly.

Dr. Samuel Johnson remarked:

‘His historics, being neither tragedies nor comedies, are not subject to any of their laws; nothing is more necessary to all the praise which they exact, than that the changes of action be so prepared as to be understood, that the incidents be various and affecting, and the characters consistent, natural, and distinct. No other unity is intended, and therefore none is sought.’

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Shakespeare was fully aware of the disadvantages and difficulties incurred in attempting to present dramatic scenes from historic events on the stage of his day, with all its incapacities. Much had to be left to the imagination when battles, council scenes, and coronations were staged.

Elizabethan drama was produced with no scenery, no *décor*, no lighting effects, to create a preliminary impression, or to charge the bare dialogue with the significance of place and occasion. The Playwright had a difficult task to perform. On a stage whose only effects were a curtain and a placard, he had to present to the mental vision the 'high wild hills and rough uneven ways' of Gloucestershire, Gaultree forest, Shallow's orchard, Bosworth field, the gates of Angiers, Harfleur, Orleans, Agincourt, and London, exteriors and interiors, from the Tower to Smithfield.

His characters, on their appearance, had to be made to explain their surroundings and identity at the same time as they took part in the immediate action necessary for the movement of the plot.

The handicaps under which the players themselves laboured were not lightened by the fact that on the apron stage of the period they had to rant and strut up and down between the stools of those playgoers who paid for the special privilege of sitting on the stage itself, and face a pit which indulged in horse-play and frankly expressed criticism.

But the great Playwright ignored these deterrents when composing his spectacular dramas, although, at times, in his Prologue, he makes excuses to his

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audience for the shortcomings of his properties. On this subject Sir Sidney Lee remarks:

'Shakespeare's splendid prelude to his play of *Henry V* is a spirited appeal to his audience not to waste regrets on defects of stage machinery, but to bring to the observation of his piece their highest powers of imagination, whereby alone can full justice be done to a majestic theme. The central topic of the choric speech is the essential limitations of all scenic appliances. The dramatist reminds us that the literal presentation of life itself, in all its movements and action, lies outside the range of the stage, especially the movement and action of life in its most glorious manifestations. Shakespeare finally admonishes his hearers that the illusion of the drama can only be complete in the theatre through the working of "the imaginary forces" of the spectators. It is needful for them to "make imaginary puissance". It is their 'thoughts' that 'must deck' the kings of the stage. . . . Shakespeare lays down this law, that in the case of great romantic plays the genuinely artistic success of the dramatic representation mainly depends on the "thoughts" or imagination of the spectators, which is alone capable of supplying the inevitable "imperfections" of actor and stage carpenter'.

In the fourteen years which elapsed between the first production of *Henry V* and that of *Henry VIII*, however, there had been considerable advancement in the elaboration of stage settings. It is recorded by Sir Henry Wotton in *Reliquiae Wottonianae*, 1675, that at the Globe Theatre in 1613 the latter piece—

'was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of Pomp and Majesty, even to the matting of the Stage; the Knights of the Order, with their Georges and Garters, the

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guards with their embroidered Coats, and the like : sufficient in truth within a while to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous.'

Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* is set in national circumstances presenting a strong contrast to the turbulent era with which the earlier historical dramas are concerned. After the exhausting struggle of the Wars of the Roses ending in the battle of Bosworth Field, Henry VII came to the throne of England, and united the warring factions by his marriage with Elizabeth of York, daughter of Edward IV. In their son, Henry VIII, the rival roses of York and Lancaster were combined. England became once more a nation with united interests, under a sovereign who had no cause to fear that his throne was coveted by a powerful opponent. With the Tudor dynasty England had already entered what was to prove a new epoch for the realm, culminating in the glorious reign of Elizabeth, during which, instead of conquests in France, this country was to see the foundation of the Empire across the seas. As Professor Gervinus says of *Henry VIII* in relation to the earlier Chronicle plays: 'The noise of arms has ceased, the prominent personages are men of education, mind and well-won merit.'

Interest in the subject is peculiarly increased when it is brought to mind that the Playwright devised his plot at a time very shortly removed from that when his principal characters occupied the stirring scene in animated reality. The entire generation of their contemporaries had not passed away, and some yet survived who had come into

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personal contact with these personages and participated in the events in which they were concerned.

Cavendish, the faithful usher of Wolsey, and the recorder of his deeds, died only two or three years before Shakespeare was born. The Poet, who came to London in very early youth, might have formed the acquaintance of more than one elderly gossip who remembered the trial, divorce, and death of Katharine of Arragon; the favour and fall of the great Cardinal; the marriage, coronation, and execution of Anne Boleyn; the christening of her daughter Elizabeth; and the first dawn of the recently established Faith.

The ethical point on which the action of this play turns is the victory of Protestantism. Protestantism was immensely popular at the epoch when *Henry VIII* was first produced, and Shakespeare held no brief for Popery. His *King John* was based upon an old play by an imitator of Marlowe, entitled *The Troublesome Raigne of King John*, a bitter tractate against the Papacy.

Few of the Churchmen in this cycle of plays are shown in such a creditable light as Cranmer, the embodiment of the New Faith. Wolsey and Gardiner, in the same play, are representatives of the old régime; and in parts *Henry VIII* is almost a parable.

Here Shakespeare carried his history to the threshold of the English Reformation. In the year 1521, in which the play opens, King Henry's celebrated book against Luther and his heresy was published and won for him from the Pope the title

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“Defender of the Faith”. In 1533, the year of the events with which the play closes, were passed those Acts of Parliament which severed England from the spiritual sovereignty of the Papal See.

In the final scene a high prophetic note is struck in relation to the era of peace and prosperity to come with the foreshadowed accession of Elizabeth, and her successor, James I.

Nicholas Rowe, Shakespeare's first biographer, who died in 1718, says of this play:

‘In his *Henry the Eighth*, that prince is drawn with that greatness of mind and all those good qualities which are attributed to him in any account of his reign. If his faults are not shown in an equal degree, and the shades in this picture do not bear a just proportion to the lights, it is not that the artist wanted either colours or skill in the disposition of them; but the truth, I believe, might be, that he forebore doing it out of regard for Queen Elizabeth, since it could have been no very great respect to the memory of his mistress, to have exposed some certain parts of her father's life upon the stage. He has dealt much more freely with the minister of that great king; and certainly nothing was ever more justly written, than the character of *Cardinal Wolsey*. He has shown him insolent in his prosperity; and yet, by a wonderful address, he makes his fall and ruin the subject of general compassion. The whole man, with his vices and virtues, is finely and exactly described in the second scene of the fourth act. The distresses likewise of *Queen Katharine*, in this play, are very movingly touched; and though the art of the poet has screened *King Henry* from any gross imputation of injustice, yet one is inclined to wish, the Queen had met with a fortune more worthy of her birth and virtue’.



## SHAKESPEARE THE POET-HISTORIAN

Dr. Johnson paid his tribute to the continued popularity of Shakespeares' last drama as a stage spectacle, but criticised its construction :

'The play of Henry the Eighth is one of those which still keeps possession of the stage by the splendour of its pageantry. . . . The coronation about forty years ago, drew the people together in multitudes for a great part of the winter. . . . Yet pomp is not the only merit of this play. The meek sorrows and virtuous distress of Katharine have furnished some scenes, which may be justly numbered among the greatest efforts of tragedy. But the genius of Shakespeare comes in and goes out with Katharine. Every other part may be easily conceived and easily written.'

In the Preface to his edition of the play as arranged for representation at the Princess's Theatre', Charles Kean wrote :

'In continuing the series of historical illustrations successively presented to the public at the Princess's Theatre, I have on this occasion selected Shakespeare's *King Henry the Eighth*, as not only offering a marked contrast to the remote and gorgeous antiquity of *Sardanapalus*, the barbaric wildness of *Macbeth*, the feudal pomp of *King John*, and the exciting variety of *Richard the Third*; but as embracing a period and a chain of events more recent and more familiar, connected with a higher civilisation, intimately associated with our strongest national feelings, and above all, productive of that wonderful and controlling change in the destinies of England—THE REFORMATION.'

# HISTORY OF KING HENRY THE EIGHTH

## CHAPTER II

“ THE FAMOUS HISTORY OF THE LIFE OF KING HENRY  
THE EIGHTH ”

THE action of this play is commonly described as commencing shortly after the return of the English court from the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, and terminating with the christening of the infant Princess Elizabeth in 1533; thus extending over a period of about thirteen years. At the same time, Shakespeare anticipates some important events belonging to the year 1543, whereby he has virtually extended the action of the play to within a few years of the King's death. In this manner the dominant facts of the reign of Henry VIII are presented: the doom of feudalism, the evolution of a strong constitutional monarchy, the fall of the Papacy, and the establishment of the Reformed Church.

The most important and interesting characters of the piece are Queen Katharine and Cardinal Wolsey. ‘The true conclusion of *Henry VIII*’, Schlegel says, ‘is the death of Katharine’, which Shakespeare ‘has placed earlier than was conformable to history’.

Both the actions and the fates of the Queen and the Cardinal are, however, directly influenced by

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the King, and react as impressive commentaries on the personality of that sovereign.

Sir Sidney Lee points out:

'The King, Henry VIII, is a moving force throughout the play. He is no very subtle portrait, being for the most part King Hal of popular tradition, imperious and autocratic, impulsive and sensual, and at the same time both generous and selfish. But Queen Katharine, a touching portrait of matronly dignity and resignation, is the heroine of the drama, and her withdrawal comparatively early in its progress produces the impression of an anticlimax. The mid-way fall of Wolsey also disturbs the constructive balance; the arrogant statesman who has worked his way up from the ranks shows a self-confidence which his sudden peril renders pathetic, and the heroic dignity with which he meets his change of fortune prejudices the dramatic interest of the tamer incidents following his death. Anne Boleyn, who succeeds Queen Katharine as King Henry's wife, is no very convincing sketch of frivolity and coquettishness. Her confidante, the frank old lady, clearly reflected Shakespeare's alert intuition, but the character's conventional worldliness is far from pleasing.'

### PROLOGUE

The play opens with a Prologue, and concludes with an Epilogue, in the manner of *Henry V*, which of Shakespeare's earlier histories it resembles most closely in design.

Possibly in reference to earlier comedies, with which the popular Playwrights' name had become associated, the first lines of the Prologue proclaim:

'I come no more to make you laugh: things now,  
That bear a weighty and a serious brow,

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Sad, high and working, full of state and woe,  
Such noble scenes as draw the eye to flow,  
We now present. . . .’

The Epilogue is written in less impressive style, and, as will be discussed later, probably not by the hand of Shakespeare.

### ACT I

The action of the first three scenes in Act I takes place at, or in the vicinity of, the King’s Palace at Bridewell, London. This royal residence was a handsome structure of considerable magnitude. The Thames front, with its imposing castellated aspect, reached the banks of the river, and extended northward as far as St. Bride’s Church. It had also a magnificent exterior facing the Fleet river, on the other side of which the Monastery of the Black Friars was located.

In a conversation between the Dukes of Norfolk and Buckingham, and Lord Abergavenny, we learn that the pride and arrogance of Cardinal Wolsey, who has raised himself by his own exertions to the post of Lord Chancellor, and a rank inferior only to the King himself, have aroused the apprehension and bitter enmity of the nobles. Buckingham, disdaining to dissemble his antipathy, is the most unguarded critic of the powerful Cardinal.

Wolsey himself interrupts them, entering in state, according to the Stage Directions:

*‘ . . . the purse borne before him, certain of the Guard, and two Secretaries with papers. The Cardinal in his passage fixeth his eye on Buckingham, and Buckingham on him, both full of disdain.’*

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Fully conscious of the resentful attitude of the old nobility, Wolsey is watching his opportunity to accuse Buckingham and remove him from his sphere of activity. The slanderous witness of a dismissed employee of the Duke, lately his Surveyor, enables the vindictive churchman to complete his evidence and obtain Buckingham's arrest for treason.

The second scene is the Council Chamber. The King enters, '*leaning on the Cardinal's shoulder*', for the examination of the Surveyor. Queen Katharine makes her suit to the King on behalf of the people, who are complaining of the heavy burden of taxation laid on them by the instrumentality of Wolsey. Henry is surprised and displeased, but the Lord Chancellor plausibly justifies his actions as expedient and approved by the judges. While accepting his explanation, the King issues commands that the oppression shall be removed, upon which the wily Cardinal directs his secretary to spread the rumour that it is he who has obtained the revocation through his intercession.

The veiled hostility existing between the Queen and Wolsey is apparent in her championship of the cause of the Commons, and then of Buckingham, in opposition to him.

The Surveyor, questioned by the King and the Cardinal, accuses the Duke of plotting to murder Henry and seize the crown himself, prompted by the spurious prophecy of a monk who had predicted that he should govern England. Buckingham is to be brought to trial as a traitor.

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In Scene 3 a conversation between the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Sands, and Sir Thomas Lovell is interpolated which appears irrelevant to the plot. It is a discussion by disapproving members of the older generation on the absurdities of the mincing manners and new fashions from France affected by the 'travell'd gallants', and the order for their repression. The lavish hospitality of Cardinal Wolsey, to whose supper party they are proceeding, is applauded. Masques were a type of entertainment very popular among the English nobility of the time.

Scene 4 is the Hall in York Place, Wolsey's splendid palace. His guests, among whom are Anne Boleyn, with other ladies and gentlemen of the court, and the three courtiers of the previous scene, seat themselves at the tables and entertain each other with merry badinage until the entry of their host.

The festivities, encouraged by Wolsey, are interrupted by the unexpected arrival of some masked strangers, who are described on entry in the Stage Directions as:

*' . . . the King and others, as masquers, habited like shepherds, ushered by the Lord Chamberlain. They pass directly before the Cardinal, and gracefully salute him.'*

The unknown revellers lead out the ladies to dance, the disguised King choosing Anne Boleyn. Wolsey, knowing full well that Henry is present, pretends to guess which one he is. The wily Cardinal is right; whereupon the King, pleased and flattered, unmasks.

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He is paying marked attention to Anne Boleyn, and enquires her name of the Lord Chamberlain. The banquet being ready in the privy chamber, he leads her thither, bidding the party make merry.

### ACT II

This Act also opens with a dialogue descriptive of public opinion on current events. Two gentlemen, meeting in a street near Westminster Hall, discuss Buckingham's trial. The Duke himself presently passes:

*' . . . tipstaves before him ; the axe with the edge towards him, halberds on each side : . . . . . '*

He is accompanied by officers of the court. The condemned man addresses the assembled crowd, proclaiming his innocence, but accepting his fate with noble humility.

When he has gone by, the rumour is voiced of a separation between the King and Queen. This is said to be the work of the Cardinal in revenge because the King of Spain has refused him the Archbishopric of Toledo.

The next scene returns to Bridewell Palace. Here the King's divorce is openly spoken of and deplored between the Lord Chamberlain and the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk. Presently, according to the Stage Directions:

*' . . . the King draws the curtain and sits reading pensively.'*

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'Draws' is here 'draws back', according to Sir Sidney Lee. The curtain, or 'traverse', in the Elizabethan theatre hung across the back part of the stage, and was on occasion withdrawn to indicate a change of scene, or to disclose an inner chamber, as here.

Wolsey and Cardinal Campeius, the Pope's Legate, who has arrived ostensibly to pronounce the judgment of Rome on the divorce, enter, to be warmly greeted by the King. The important question is debated, and the place of the trial fixed at Black Friars. During the discussion Henry speaks with compunction and affection of Katharine.

Gardiner, afterwards Bishop of Winchester, Wolsey's creature, and Henry's new secretary, is introduced in this scene.

In an ante-chamber of the Queen's apartments in Scene 3, an old lady of worldly views rallies Anne Boleyn on her avowal that she would not be a queen 'and wear a golden sorrow' like their unhappy mistress, Katharine. Anne shows every sign of astonishment when the Lord Chamberlain comes to inform her that the King has shown his favour by creating her Marchioness of Pembroke, which gives her confidence further opportunity for teasing her on future possibilities.

The great divorce trial in the Hall at Black Friars follows. This impressive scene opens with a stately procession of the judges, principals in the trial, and officers of the court. The elaborate Stage Directions marshal it thus:

*'Trumpets, sennet and cornets. Enter two Vergers, with short silver wands; next them, two Scribes, in the habit of*



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*doctors; after them, the Archbishop of Canterbury alone; after him, the Bishops of Lincoln, Ely, Rochester, and Saint Asaph; next them, with some small distance, follows a Gentleman bearing the purse, with the great seal, and a cardinal's hat; then two Priests, bearing each a silver cross; then a Gentleman-Usher bareheaded, accompanied with a Sergeant-at-Arms bearing a silver mace; then two Gentlemen bearing two great silver pillars; after them, side by side, the two Cardinals; two Noblemen with the sword and mace. The King takes place under the cloth of state; the two Cardinals sit under him as judges. The Queen takes place some distance from the King. The Bishops place themselves on each side the court, in manner of a consistory; below them, the Scribes. The Lords sit next the Bishops. The rest of the Attendants stand in convenient order about the stage.'*

Queen Katharine appeals to the King for 'right and justice' in a noble and impassioned speech, reminding him of her twenty years of faithful wifehood, and entreating him to enable her to take counsel with her friends in Spain. Against Wolsey's interference her pride revolts, and between them there is an interchange of accusation and denial. Finally, refusing to acknowledge him as one of her judges, the harassed Queen announces her resolve to appeal to the Pope in person, and leaves the court with dignity.

Moved by Katharine's sincerity, Henry reflects upon her goodness, until his scruples revive. The projected marriage between his daughter Mary and the Duke of Orleans had raised the question of the legality of his marriage with his late brother's wife. The Bishop of Bayonne, then French Ambassador,

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had been inclined to debate the point. Since all the children of their marriage, excepting this one daughter, had died at birth, or in early infancy, the King's conscience had been at work, fearing the circumstances to be a judgment from heaven.

The King vows that he will be contented with the decision of the court whichever way it is pronounced, but Cardinal Campeius advises an adjournment until the Queen can be persuaded to retract her appeal to the Pope. The delay does not please Henry, whose last words at the close of the Scene are a desire for the return of the Lutheran Cranmer to hasten the proceedings.

### ACT III

The first scene of the third Act takes place in the Queen's apartments in Bridewell Palace. Katharine, diverting her sad thoughts with music, is interrupted by the arrival of the two Cardinals, Wolsey and Campeius, who seek to counsel her to accept the decree of divorce. The angry and humiliated Queen fiercely resists their subtle arguments, but their persistence overcomes her opposition. Crushed in spirit she consents to their guidance, and bids them 'Do what ye will, my lords.'

Another conversation between the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Earl of Surrey, and the Lord Chamberlain, in the next scene, reveals that the King, without the knowledge of Wolsey, has privately married Anne Boleyn; whilst the Cardinal, fearful of such an event, has written secretly to the Pope to delay the judgment of the divorce.

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This fateful letter, Suffolk relates, has miscarried, and fallen into the hands of the King. While Cardinal Campeius has 'stol'n away to Rome' to further Wolsey's schemings there, Cranmer has pronounced his opinion in favour of the divorce, to the great satisfaction of his royal patron.

Wolsey enters, accompanied by his secretary, Thomas Cromwell, of whom he enquires concerning a packet of state papers which were to be delivered to the King. Left alone, the Cardinal meditates upon his determination that Henry shall marry the French King's sister, the Duchess of Alençon, and that the 'spleeny (i.e. hot-headed) Lutheran', Anne Boleyn, and the 'heretic, an arch one', Cranmer, shall be eclipsed.

By an unfortunate error, the packet handed to King Henry contained an inventory of the immense property which Wolsey had amassed in order to obtain, at some future period, the Papal crown. At this moment his sovereign approaches with Sir Thomas Lovell, deeply engrossed in the documents and much astonished at their contents. Perceiving his erstwhile favourite, Henry addresses him in ironical vein. The other is mystified by his changed tone, until the King gives him the papers as he goes out, '*frowning upon the Cardinal*', according to the Stage Directions, while the nobles, now daring to show their open hostility, '*throng after him, smiling and whispering.*'

A glance at the papers reveals to the appalled prelate the extent of the adversity which has befallen him. The Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk,

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the Earl of Surrey, and the Lord Chamberlain return to convey to him the royal command that he shall deliver up the Great Seal and confine himself in the Bishop of Winchester's palace. They take the long-desired opportunity of jibing at the fallen Lord Chancellor, and leave him to contemplate his downfall with the knowledge that it has been brought about by his own pride and ambition.

Cromwell is the only friend who seeks him; and he brings the news that Sir Thomas More is chosen Lord Chancellor in Wolsey's place; Cranmer is installed Archbishop of Canterbury; and the King has announced his marriage to Anne Boleyn. Repentant and forlorn, touched at Cromwell's loyalty, Wolsey bids him go serve the King and profit by the example of his own failings and errors to order his life and actions on a worthier scale.

The great Cardinal passes from the play on a note of resignation and farewell.

### ACT IV

Queen Anne's coronation takes place in the opening scene of Act IV. It is again the street in Westminster, where the two gentlemen, who discussed Buckingham's trial, now witness the magnificent state procession coming from the Abbey, the order of which is fully described in the elaborate Stage Directions:

#### *'The Order of the Coronation*

1. *A lively Flourish of Trumpets.*
2. *Then, two Judges.*
3. *Lord Chancellor, with the purse and mace before him.*

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4. Choristers, *singing*. (Musicians.)
  5. Mayor of London, *bearing the mace*. Then Garter, in his coat of arms, and on his head a gilt copper crown.
  6. Marquess Dorset, *bearing a sceptre of gold, on his head a demi-coronal of gold*. With him, the Earl of Surrey, *bearing the rod of silver with the dove, crowned with an earl's coronet*. Collars of SS.
  7. Duke of Suffolk, in his robe of estate, his coronet on his head, *bearing a long white wand, as high-steward*. With him, the Duke of Norfolk, with the rod of marshalship, a coronet on his head. Collars of SS.
  8. A canopy borne by four of the Cinque-ports; under it, the Queen in her robe; in her hair richly adorned with pearl, crowned. On each side her, the Bishops of London and Winchester.
  9. The old Duchess of Norfolk, in a coronal of gold wrought with flowers, bearing the Queen's train.
  10. Certain Ladies or Countesses, with plain circlets of gold without flowers.
- They pass over the stage in order and state.'*

A third gentleman, who has witnessed the ceremony in the abbey, joins the others, and describes all that took place. As before, their conversation indicates the general developments to be expected in the action of the play. Mention is made of the fact that Gardiner, now Bishop of Winchester, is 'no great good lover of the archbishop's, the virtuous Cranmer'; but that Cromwell is 'a friend' who 'will not shrink from' defending Cranmer, and has become a 'man in much esteem with the king.'

It is now Queen Katharine's turn to pass from the stage. Scene 2 shows her, 'sick to death', at

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Kimbolton, where she is living in retirement under the title of Princess Dowager. Griffith, her Gentleman usher, tells her of Wolsey's death at Leicester Abbey, and she speaks with forgiveness of the man who has caused her so much sorrow.

She sleeps, and a vision appears, described thus in the Stage Directions:

*'The vision. Enter, solemnly tripping one after another, six personages, clad in white robes, wearing on their heads garlands of bays, and golden vizards on their faces; branches of bays or palm in their hands. They first congee unto her, then dance; and, at certain changes, the first two hold a spare garland over her head; at which the other four make reverent curtsies; then the two that held the garland deliver the same to the other next two, who observe the same order in their changes, and holding the garland over her head: which done, they deliver the same garland to the last two, who likewise observe the same order: at which, as it were by inspiration, she makes in her sleep signs of rejoicing, and holdeth up her hands to heaven: and so in their dancing vanish, carrying the garland with them. The music continues.'*

Katharine's awaking is followed by a visit from the Emperor Charles's ambassador, Capucius, by whom she sends a letter to King Henry, commending to his care their daughter, Mary, and her own attendants. Her last expressed desire is that she may be interred 'like a queen, and daughter to a king.'

### ACT V

The last Act returns to Bridewell Palace. Gardiner plots with Sir Thomas Lovell the downfall of

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Cranmer, who is to appear before the Council on the accusation of heresy.

A conversation follows between the King and the Archbishop, in which Henry informs his new favourite of the charges against him. Cranmer's humility and transparent honesty so affect his sovereign, that the King gives him his ring and enjoins him to make a direct appeal to himself should his arguments before the Council prove unavailing.

As Cranmer retires, the Old Lady, who appeared as Anne's confidante earlier in the play, announces the joyful tidings that a daughter has been born to the young Queen.

In Scene 2, '*Before the council chamber*', Cranmer is kept waiting at the door until the Council call him in. Dr. Butts, the royal physician, shows the King what is taking place from a window in the wall above, where they are unobserved by the councillors. At that period windows in the large rooms of manor halls, castles, and palaces, especially in the kitchen or banquet hall, were quite common. From these apertures the master or mistress of the house could overlook the movements of their servants from adjacent closets or passages. A gallery at the back formed part of the stage arrangement in Shakespeare's day, and in the original production the King and Butts appeared on this between the folds of a curtain.

Henry's concluding words are:

'By holy Mary, Butts, there's knavery :  
Let 'em alone, and draw the curtain close :  
We shall hear more anon.'

V. 2. 33-35.

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The scene then changes to the Council Chamber. The Folios make no new scene to begin here. The Stage Direction in the Folio edition directs:

*'A Councell Table brought in with Chayres and Stools and placed under the State.'*

This is obviously due to the absence of scenery on Shakespeare's stage. By the introduction of the necessary furniture the audience were to understand that the scene had changed from the lobby to the interior of the Council Chamber itself. The division here of Scenes 2 and 3 was first suggested by Pope, and Scene 3 commences with the entry of the councillors as ordered in the Stage Directions:

*'Enter Lord Chancellor, places himself at the upper end of the table on the left hand; a seat being left void above him, as for Canterbury's seat; Duke of Suffolk, Duke of Norfolk, Surrey, Lord Chamberlain, Gardiner, seat themselves in order on each side. Cromwell at lower end, as secretary. Keeper at the door.'*

Cranmer, who for half an hour has found the doors 'all fast' against him, is at last admitted. Gardiner's hatred and jealousy come to a head in his accusation that the Archbishop of Canterbury has been spreading dangerous new doctrines, thereby creating mischief amongst the King's subjects. Cranmer denies the charge of disloyalty, and there is a sharp exchange between Gardiner and Cromwell; but Gardiner holds to his purpose to commit the Archbishop to the Tower. The accused, however, shows the Kings' ring, and proclaims:



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'By virtue of that ring, I take my cause  
Out of the gripes of cruel men and give it  
To a most noble judge, the king my master.'

V. 3. 99-101.

Sir Sidney Lee explains: 'In mediæval and renaissance days the kings were constantly credited with the possession of a ring, which freed any on whom it was bestowed from all processes of law. Ownership of the king's ring could be pleaded as a royal pardon.' The well-known instance of the ring given to the Earl of Essex by Queen Elizabeth might be cited as a case in point.

King Henry enters, '*frowning on them*', and sits on his chair of state. With a rebuke to the members of the Council for their treatment of the Archbishop, he commands a reconciliation, which is made with a good grace. Cranmer he addresses with marked favour, and appoints him godfather to the infant Princess Elizabeth.

The two final scenes are the occasion of the christening of the future Good Queen Bess. There is a facetious exchange of broad pleasantries between the Porter and his man holding the gates of the Palace yard against the assembled crowds; while within the Palace a stately procession is formed:

'*Enter Trumpets, sounding; then two Aldermen, Lord Mayor, Garter, Cranmer, Duke of Norfolk with his marshal's staff, Duke of Suffolk, two Noblemen bearing great standing-bowls for the christening-gifts; then four Noblemen bearing a canopy, under which the Duchess of Norfolk,*

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*godmother, bearing the child richly habited in a mantle, etc., train borne by a Lady; then follows the Marchioness of Dorset, the other godmother, and Ladies. The troop pass once about the stage, and Garter speaks.'*

The play concludes with an inspired prophecy by Cranmer of the blessings which will spread through the land in the prosperous reign of 'this chosen infant', and her successor, King James I.

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### CHAPTER III

#### CONJECTURES REGARDING THE DATE OF THE PLAY

THIS 'sort of historical masque, or show play', as Coleridge calls it, appears to have been produced hurriedly and under pressure, possibly for production on some important public occasion on which it was desirable to emphasise the munificence of the monarchy and the triumph of Protestantism. With the assistance of the chronicles, and having in view the fact that processions and pageantry were required on a lavish scale, its rapid development and completion in the hands of a skilled playwright should have given little trouble.

A difference of opinion as to the approximate date at which *Henry VIII* was written, and the event which was celebrated by its first representation, has existed among critics. A date as far back as the year 1600 has been adduced for the original composition. With other early commentators, Malone believed it should be placed, in part, at least, prior to the year 1603, while Queen Elizabeth was still on the throne, citing in support of his theory the eulogy on the future Virgin Queen pronounced by Cranmer at her baptism. But this biographer also expressed an opinion that it subsequently received some revision after her death,

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being revived with a new title and prologue, 'having lain by some years unacted.' He supposed that among the lines added at this time were those which seem to refer to James I and the colonisation of Virginia :

' Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,  
His honour and the greatness of his name  
Shall be, and make new nations.'

V. 5. 51-53.

' I suspect,' wrote Malone, ' that the panegyrick on the King was introduced either in the year 1606, or in 1612, when a lottery was granted expressly for the establishment of English Colonies in Virginia.' Actually, the colony was planted in 1607, in which year James Town was built.

Judging by internal evidence and contemporary references, modern critics have come to the conclusion that the play, as it stands, was written about 1612-13, and this date is now generally accepted. It is thus placed as the last in which the great Poet's characteristic hand is discernible. He died in 1616, after three succeeding years of literary inactivity.

The decorative splendour of the play could not have been contrived on a public stage at a much earlier date. The popularity of the elaborate court masques, inaugurated by James I, had reacted upon the taste in drama at the public theatres, and created a popular demand for spectacles which playwrights and managers were prepared to gratify on a scale undreamed of in the past.

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In February, 1613, the court was the scene of sumptuous entertainments and festivities in celebration of the marriage of the Princess Elizabeth, daughter of King James, and the Elector Palatine. Processions and solemn ceremonies delighted the eyes of the public. The masquers of the Inner Temple and Gray's Inn reached Whitehall by water in barges, like the masquers at Cardinal Wolsey's banquet.

The chronicle-history drama had in a great degree fallen out of favour previous to this time, but it is quite reasonable to suppose that the management of the *Globe Theatre* now determined to produce a history play in the new mode, spectacular, lavishly staged, presenting personages of high estate, who had died within living memory, in 'noble scenes', as the Prologue to *Henry VIII* asserts. Shakespeare's name in relation to historical drama was one to conjure with. The time was ripe for a new piece of this type by the popular playwright.

With such a purpose in view, the construction of the play differed widely from the previous dramas of the chronicle series, and its balance suffered thereby.

Sir Sidney Lee comments:

'Throughout, the development of events is interrupted by five barely relevant pageants: (1) the entertainment provided for Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn by Cardinal Wolsey; (2) the elaborate embellishment of the trial scene of Queen Katharine; (3) the coronation of Anne Boleyn; (4) a vision acted in dumb show in Queen Katharine's dying moments; and (5) the christening procession of the Princess Elizabeth.'

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It is doubtful whether the play was actually presented at court at the time. According to an extant list, nineteen pieces were acted before the King and Queen and the bridal party during the festival weeks which succeeded the wedding ceremony, but *Henry VIII* is not mentioned among them.

A further indication as to date is the suitability of the subject chosen. During the reign of Elizabeth it is unlikely that Shakespeare would have written a drama in which the Queen's father was not presented in a most favourable light, Queen Katharine was held up as an example of a virtuous and much injured wife, and Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn, had a small and colourless part. In the next reign, however, such objections did not hold.

The defeat of the Catholic party, and the establishment of the reformed and popular Faith was a theme of interest. In an Introduction to an edition of the play 'as performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,' dated 1773, it is remarked:

'Shakespeare, by taking up so recent a piece of history as the subject of this play, at first view, seems to have entered on a critical hazardous undertaking; but if we consider that the reformation was then warm in the minds of the people, and perceive in how masterly a manner he has glossed over the character of Harry, still preserving his peculiarities, it appears not only safe but politic, to enter on such a theme.'

The versification of parts of *Henry VIII* bears the characteristics of Shakespeare's latest plays, and there is a complete absence of prose, with the exception of a portion of the short Scene 4 of Act V,

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the only comedy interlude. It is in this scene that an allusion is made, which undoubtedly dates it, to 'some strange Indian . . . come to court'. Five Indians were brought to England in 1611 by explorers of the new American continent. One of these, distinguished for his stature, remained in this country until 1614, and was exhibited to the public in different parts of London.

Apart from these evidences, there are contemporary references to '*a new play*' dealing with the reign of Henry VIII, produced for the first time at the Globe Theatre on June 29th, in the year 1613. The event was memorable and placed on record for the fact that on this occasion the Globe Theatre, where so many of Shakespeare's plays had been acted by Burbage's company, was burnt down.

The Globe was the principal public playhouse in London at that time. Erected about 1598, it was an hexagonal building, open in the middle over the yard or pit where the 'groundlings' stood, and thatched over the boxes. It was situated at the Bankside, Southwark, near London Bridge, and took its name from an herculean figure supporting the globe, on which were the Latin words, *Totus mundus agit histrionem*. The accident which caused the conflagration is attributed to flaming wadding discharged from the cannons during Wolsey's banquet in Act I, Scene 4, when, according to the Stage Directions, '*Drum and trumpet: chambers discharged,*' signal the entrance of the king.

Preserved in the Harleian Manuscripts there is a letter from Thomas Lorkin to Sir Thomas Puck-

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ering, dated 'this last of June, 1613', in which the writer says:

'No longer since than yesterday, while Bourbage his com-  
panic were acting at the Globe the play of *Henry VIII*, and  
their shooting of certayne chambers in the way of triumph,  
the fire catch'd.'

In Winwood's *Memorials*, a letter from John Chamberlain to Sir Ralph Winwood, dated from London, July 12th, 1613, describes the burning of the Globe Theatre 'which fell out by a peale of chambers.' The audience and actors were forewarned in good time of the danger in which they stood. No one was hurt. 'It was a marvel and fair grace of God that the ppeople had so little harm, having but two narrow doors to get out,' John Chamberlain remarks.

Most of the properties were saved, besides; but Sir Sidney Lee thinks:

'There is reason to believe that in the demolished play-house were many of the players' books, including Shakespeare's original manuscripts, which were the property of his theatrical company. Scattered copies survived elsewhere in private hands, but the loss of the dramatist's autographs rendered incurable the many textual defects of surviving manuscripts.'

Howes, in his continuation of Stow's 'Chronicle', writing some time after the destruction of the theatre, adds to his account of the fire: 'And the next spring it was new builded in far fairer manner than before.' He speaks of the title of the play as



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a familiar thing: 'The house being filled with people to behold the play, viz., of *Henry the 8.*'

The fullest report of what occurred is given by Sir Henry Wotton in a letter to his nephew, Sir Edmund Bacon. He says:

'I will entertain you at the present with what hath happened this week at the Bankside. The King's Players had a new Play, called *All is True*, representing some principal pieces of the reign of *Henry the 8th*, which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of Pomp and Majesty. . . . Now, King *Henry* making a Masque at the Cardinal *Wolsey's* House, and certain cannons being shot off at his entry, some of the paper and other stuff, where-with one of them was stopped, did light on the Thatch, where being thought at first but an idle smoak, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly, and ran round like a train, consuming within less than an hour the whole House to the very grounds. This was the fatal period of the vertuous fabrique; wherein yet nothing did perish, but wood and straw and a few forsaken cloaks; only one man had his breeches set on fire, which would perhaps have broyled him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident wit put it out with bottle ale.'

Assuming that this was the first production of Shakespeare's play, in modern stage parlance, the 'curtain was rung down' before the performance was half way through.

The title *All is True*, mentioned by Sir Henry Wotton, is believed to have been the original one, which was eventually merged in the more obvious title derived from the subject of the play, as in the case of Shakespeare's other historical dramas. This

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conjecture is probably correct, inasmuch as lines in the Prologue emphasise the truth of the story to be presented:

‘ . . . . . Such as give  
Their money out of hope they may believe,  
May here find truth too . . . .  
. . . . . gentle hearers, know,  
To rank our chosen truth with such a show  
As fool and fight is, besides forfeiting  
Our own brains and the opinion that we bring,  
To make that only true we now intend,  
Will leave us never an understanding friend.’

The burden of a contemporary ‘sonnet upon the pittifull burneing of the Globe Play-House in London’ seems to have reference to the same earlier title, the last line of the verses ending with ‘yett all this is true:’

‘ All you that please to understand  
Come, listen to my storye,  
To see Death with his rakeing brand,  
’Mong such an auditorye;  
Regarding neither Cardinall’s might  
Nor yett the rugged face of Henry theight.  
Oh, sorrow; pitifull sorrow, and yett all this is true.’

The fifth stanza, also, contains the lines:

‘ Away ran lady Catherinc,  
Nor waited out her trial.’

The only other known play which might possibly be inferred is another drama dealing with incidents in the life of Henry VIII by Samuel Rowley. This was *When You See Me You Know Me*, or *The*

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*Famous Chronicle Historie of King Henrie the Eight, with the Birth and Vertuous Life of Edward Prince of Wales.* It was printed in 1605, and reprinted in 1613, possibly on account of the popularity of Shakespeare's play.

Rowley's play, which was performed by Prince Henry's company, is a confused jumble of historical and imaginary episodes enlivened with buffoonery. It commences with the death of Queen Jane Seymour, and hastily passes over the king's marriage to Anne of Cleves to his courtship of Katharine Parr. Cardinal Wolsey, who, at the time the play opens, had actually been dead for some years, is introduced: and Will Summers, the king's jester, is an important character. Lines in the Prologue of *Henry VIII* may be in disparaging allusion to this comedy. The author announces that he does not intend to emulate 'such a show as fool and fight is':

' . . . . . Only they  
That come to hear a merry bawdy play,  
A noise of targets, or to see a fellow  
In a long motley coat guarded with yellow,  
Will be deceived; . . . '

It seems certain that *When You See Me You Know Me* was *The Enterlude of King Henry VIII* mentioned in a memorandum in the Stationers' Register of 1605, although it has been suggested that this may have been an earlier form of Shakespeare's play.

The reign of '*Bluff King Hal*' contained much material which attracted the attention of play-

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wrights little more than half a century after his death. Shespeare's company produced two plays, *Thomas, Lord Cromwell* and *Sir Thomas More*, in which King Henry's statesmen figured respectively as principal characters. Some entries in Henslowe's *Diary* show that Henry Chettle's *Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, and *The Rising of Cardinal Wolsey* by Chettle, from a draft by Anthony Munday, Michael Drayton and Wentworth-Smith, were being played in 1601 and 1602 by the Admiral's company under Henslowe's management. These dramas have not been preserved.

The accepted conclusion regarding Shespeare's *Henry VIII* is, that the play was probably written almost immediately before it was produced on the stage in June, 1613. As *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eight*, it first appeared in print in the Folio collection of Shespeare's dramatic works in 1623, in which the text is given with a degree of accuracy beyond that commonly found in this First Folio. It is there divided into Acts and Scenes. A list of the *Dramatis Personæ* was first given by Rowe, though imperfectly.

## THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

### CHAPTER IV

#### THE QUESTION OF AUTHORSHIP

WITH the exception of *Henry VI*, *Henry VIII* as a whole is not so well constructed as the other historical plays which bear Shakespeare's name. There is unnecessary padding; and scenes are inserted without clear connection with the main plot, which lack interest and inspiration. The reader receives the impression that they have been hastily sketched in for reasons of expediency by a writer for the stage rather than by a dramatic genius.

On the other hand, there are also scenes so brilliantly conceived, so dramatically planned and developed, that their reality is impressive. They are composed with all the vigorous word-painting characteristic of the great Poet's pen.

It is now generally accepted that *Henry VIII*, as *Pericles*, is the work of more than one author. The scheme is one which does not bear Shakespeare's stamp. It has no dramatic centre, no ascent, no culmination, and no subsidence. The tragedy of Buckingham is succeeded by the tragedy of Wolsey; and this by the tragedy of Queen Katharine. After this the play closes with a final anti climax of triumphs and rejoicings. The fifth act has been called indeed, an 'artistic impertinence'.

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The editors of the Folio of 1623, Heminge and Condell, friends and fellow-actors of Shakespeare, might be trusted to have decided on the authenticity of the plays included in their volume of his collected dramatic works. Certainly they omitted some which have occasionally been associated with the name of the great Playwright, such as *Two Noble Kinsmen*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, and *Cromwell*. But they did include in the First Folio other plays which show undoubted signs of more than one authorship, such as the three parts of *King Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus*.

Dr. Samuel Johnson was the first to raise doubt as to whether the Prologue and Epilogue to Henry VIII were actually by the hand of Shakespeare. He suggested that Ben Jonson, either through friendship or officiousness, was responsible for these additions when the piece was revived after Shakespeare's retirement from the stage.

The view that considerable portions of the play itself are attributable to one or more collaborators is of comparatively recent date. The evidence is, however, conclusive. Regarding the identity of the unnamed co-author or authors in association with Shakespeare, several contemporary playwrights have been cited by commentators whose theories are conflicting. Ben Jonson, it is thought, may have made some alterations and interpolations in the play while engaged upon the Prologue and Epilogue. Another suggestion names, instead, George Chapman as the possible composer of the Prologue and Epilogue.

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Mr. W. Aldis Wright recognises the presence of two hands in *Henry VIII*, and does not deny that one of these may be Fletcher's, but he is unable to find Shakespeare's hand anywhere at work. Emerson conjectures in *Representative Men* (1850) that Shakespeare was working upon the basis of an older play by another author, who was 'a thoughtful man, with a vicious ear.'

The generally-accepted theory is that *Henry VIII* owes its origin to two authors, of whom Shakespeare was the one and John Fletcher the other, with possible revision by a third. Fletcher was fifteen years younger than Shakespeare, and a rising and popular dramatist of the modern school. He was born in 1579, the younger son of the Bishop of London who was suspended from his office by Queen Elizabeth for taking part in the drawing up of the Lambeth Articles. In his early twenties Fletcher became connected with the stage, and joined forces with Francis Beaumont, a youthful poet of good family, in composing plays. Beaumont and Fletcher were chief favourites with the playgoing public. Their collaborative authorship was responsible for no less than fifty comedies and tragedies, including a masque, published under their joint names.

As a dramatic writer Fletcher was also associated with several other contemporaries, and the evidence points to the probability that one of them was Shakespeare. Both Beaumont and Philip Massinger, another of Fletcher's colleagues, have been suspected of lending their assistance in certain passages.

It was Lord Tennyson, the Poet Laureate, who

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observed to Mr. James Spedding 'that many passages in *Henry VIII* were very much in the manner of Fletcher'. His interest aroused, Spedding read the play with particular attention, taking special note of the versification, and came to the conclusion that at least two different hands, if not three, had been engaged in its composition. One of these was recognisable as Shakespeare's; the other, or one of the others, bore the unmistakable stamp of Fletcher. Spedding's deductions were published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of August, 1850. He assigned to Shakespeare: in Act I, Scenes 1 and 2; in Act II, Scenes 3 and 4; in Act III, Scene 2, but only to the exit of the king; and in Act V, Scene 1.

About the same time, Samuel Hickson, while writing a treatise on the possible association of Shakespeare and Fletcher in the *Two Noble Kinsmen*, was engaged upon a survey of their work, and had also arrived at exactly the same conclusion in regard to *Henry VIII*.

There are dissentients to this, as to every other theory, but this analysis of the play has been styled the 'orthodox belief.'

The several methods followed in their work by Shakespeare and Fletcher, their technique as regards the construction of a play, their elucidation and development of character, and the means by which they attain their stage effects, are strikingly dissimilar. Sir Sidney Lee, following Spedding, writes:

'No reader with an ear for metre can fail to detect in the piece two rhythms, an inferior and superior rhythm. Two



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different pens were clearly at work. The greater part of the play must be assigned to the pen of a coadjutor of Shakespeare, and considerations of metre and style identify his assistant beyond doubt with John Fletcher. . . . Shakespeare can claim the first entry of Buckingham; the scene in the council chamber in which that nobleman is charged with treason at the instigation of Wolsey; the confidential talk of Anne Boleyn, with the worldly old lady, who is ambitious for her protégé's promotion; the trial scene of Queen Katharine which is the finest feature of the play; the greater part of the episode of Wolsey's fall from power, and the King's assurances of protection to Cranmer when he is menaced by the Catholic party. The metre and language of the Shakespearian scenes are as elliptical, irregular, and broken as in "Coriolanus" or "The Tempest". There is the same close-packed expression, the same rapid and abrupt turnings of thought, the same impatient and impetuous activity of intellect and fancy. The imagery has the pointed, vivid, homely strength of Shakespeare's latest plays.'

Spedding himself, writing of Act I, Scene 1, points out that the characteristics of Shakespeare's latest style are present:

'The opening of the play—the conversation between Buckingham, Norfolk, and Abergavenny—seemed to have the full stamp of Shakespeare, in his latest manner: the same close-packed expression; the same life, and reality, and freshness; the same rapid and abrupt turnings of thought, so quick that language can hardly follow fast enough; the same impatient activity of intellect and fancy, which having once disclosed an idea cannot wait to work it orderly out; the same daring confidence in the resources of language, which plunges headlong into a sentence

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without knowing how it is to come forth; the same careless metre which disdains to produce its harmonious effects by the ordinary devices, yet is evidently subject to a master of harmony; the same entire freedom from book-language and common-place; all the qualities, in short, which distinguish the magical hand which has never yet been successfully imitated.'

Dr. Furnivall contended that Fletcher's passages illustrate the habit of triple terminations typical of his style. Statistics have been compiled by Dr. Furnivall, Dr. Ingram, and Mr. Fleay, as to the percentages of double endings, weak or light endings, and unstopped lines in the parts of the play attributed to each author.

Edward Dowden, in his introduction to the Caxton edition of *Henry VIII*, says, 'The redundant syllable is far more frequent with Fletcher than with Shakespeare; the emphasis laid on a short word forming the redundant syllable is rarely found except in Fletcher.'

Fletcher is plainly recognisable in the lines:

'As far as I can sec, all the good our English  
Have got by the late voyage is but merely  
A fit or two o' the face; but they are shrewd ones;  
For when they hold 'em, you would swear directly  
Their very noses had been counsellors  
To Pepin or Clotharius, they keep state so.'

I. 3. 5-10.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, speaks in his most familiar manner in the conversation between Anne Boleyn and her confidante:

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*Anne:*

'By my troth and maidenhead,  
I would not be a queen.

*Old Lady:*

Beshrew me, I would,  
And venture maidenhead for't; and so would you,  
For all this spice of your hypocrisy:  
You, that have so fair parts of woman on you,  
Have too a woman's heart; which ever yet  
Affected eminence, wealth, sovereignty;  
Which, to say sooth, are blessings; and which gifts—  
Saving your mincing—the capacity  
Of your soft cheveril conscience would receive,  
If you might please to stretch it.'

II. 3. 23-33.

Professor Thorndike has confirmed the results of the verse tests by what he styles 'the 'em—them test'. Shakespeare prefers 'them' to the shortened 'em', which is Fletcher's favourite form.

In the 1618 Shakespearean lines 'them' occurs seventeen times, 'em' five times; in Fletcher's 1604 lines 'them' occurs four times, 'em' fifty-seven times. Another test might possibly be found in the frequency of 'ye' in the objective case instead of 'you'.

Edward Dowden continues:

'The contrast in diction and style between the two writers is as marked, though it may be less easy to define. . . . Fletcher's meanings lie in the words, which are not living things in the highest sense, but words that may be found in the dictionary with the significations of a dictionary. Shakespeare's words are plastic, or rather alive, incalculable in their

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uses, and their collocation often creates difficulties for one who would examine each sentence with the spectacles of a grammarian; the meaning often flashes through them or across them, like the meaning of an eye which anticipates speech. "*Bosom up* my counsel," "outworths", "he *bores* me with some trick," "*self-mettle* tires him," "front him in that fire," "mounting his eyes"—these expressions, taken from the first two scenes of "King Henry VIII", are found in no other play by Shakespeare; but they are precisely the kind of words and phrases which he uses when a stress of thought or imagination calls for them.'

Several commentators maintain that Fletcher received some assistance from Philip Massinger. Massinger was at the time about thirty years of age. He was the son of a Member of Parliament, and had been educated at Oxford. But he appears to have lived in poor circumstances, making his living by writing plays. He collaborated with other dramatists, Fletcher among them, especially after Beaumont's marriage in 1613, when that playwright ceased his work for the stage.

Mr. Fleay, who had accepted Spedding's theory with reservations, expressed his opinion that Massinger actually wrote certain portions of *Henry VIII* usually ascribed to Shakespeare. He reduced Shakespeare's share to Scene 2 of Act I; and Scenes 3 and 4 of Act II.

Another learned commentator, Mr. Robert Boyle, assigns the authorship of the play wholly to Fletcher and Massinger, supposing that Shakespeare's original script was destroyed in the Globe fire. Robert Browning, the poet, agreed with this judgment,

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and wrote in a letter preserved in the Transactions of the New Shakespere Society: 'I see little that transcends the power of Massinger and Fletcher to execute. . . . The versification is nowhere Shakespeare's.'

On the other hand, another poet, Algernon Swinburne, believed that the entire play was written by Shakespeare, but in two styles, one of these a tentative style closely resembling that of Fletcher—a far-fetched theory. Professor Gervinus, whose deductions are usually sound, supposes that at the very close of his dramatic career, Shakespeare left his old companions a mere sketch to be carried out in the dramatic celebration of some court festivities.

The hypothesis has been put forward that Massinger in this instance co-operated with Fletcher, and that only a small proportion of the play was contributed, or incorporated from what had already been written, by Shakespeare. This revision and re-writing of old plays was a common expedient for the later Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. Ben Jonson frequently added his touch to plays which had been composed by other dramatists.

At the same time, it has been pointed out that the assignment of the play to Shakespeare in the First Folio was apparently left unchallenged by Fletcher and Massinger, both of whom were alive at the time of its publication. We have best grounds for assuming that Shakespeare and Fletcher were solely responsible for this new historical drama, which was probably written in response to the

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popular desire for a spectacle. The demand was immediate. To quote Dowden again :

‘No dramatist of equal distinction had a pen more facile and fluent than that of Fletcher. But the great name in chronicle history was not Fletcher ; it was the name of Shakespeare. It is possible—though highly doubtful—that Shakespeare and Fletcher had already worked in collaboration upon “The Two Noble Kinsmen”. Shakespeare had now withdrawn from dramatic authorship, but it is at least conceivable that an urgent request made on behalf of the Globe Theatre may have induced him to lend his name to the great pageant Chronicle-play, and to contribute some five or six scenes. We are in the region of conjecture, but conjectures may have their use and value, if only they are not—as too often happens—put forward in the guise of ascertained fact.’

It seems not unreasonable to presume that the younger and more up-to-date author sketched the general plan of the play, so that special opportunities should be given for spectacular display, and that his own gifts for sentimental writing should have every opening. Many of the Stage Directions are very remarkable as to detail, and evidently written with great care.

Shakespeare, it may be supposed, was to commence the play, and to introduce the leading characters. He brings Buckingham and Wolsey, King Henry and Queen Katharine, Cromwell, and lastly Cranmer, on to the stage. Anne Bolcyn and Gardiner actually appear before Shakespeare takes up his pen again, but they speak no more than a line

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or two, and do not come definitely into the action of the story until Shakespeare gives them a part to play. Their subsequent development is shaped by Fletcher.

Some minor parts are sketched in the first instance by Fletcher, and where dialogue for narrative purpose, without character, is required, as in the explanatory conversations between the First, Second and Third Gentlemen in the interpolated scenes, Fletcher supplies it.

The great scene, that of the trial of the Queen's cause, was assigned to the one of the two collaborators who could render it with surest dramatic power. Dr. Johnson asserted that the genius of Shakespeare comes in and goes out with Katharine. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch supports him. "The main business of Katharine," he says, "is indisputable Shakespeare. We have only to compare her trial scene with Hermione's in *The Winter's Tale* to convince ourselves." Moreover, he points out that the theme of a woman wrongfully used was played upon with variations in three of Shakespeare's last four plays, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *Henry VIII*.

The pathetic passages of Wolsey's fall and farewell, somewhat out of character with Shakespeare's presentation of the crafty prelate, are Fletcher's, although so often quoted as examples of the great Playwright's rhetorical style. Buckingham's address to the crowd after his condemnation is in the same category. Fletcher was in his element composing pitiful appeals to the sympathies of his audience.

It may be said generally that the scenes which involved processions and pageantry were introduced

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by the younger dramatist—the banquet at York Place, Queen Anne's Coronation, and the christening of the Princess Elizabeth.

The scene at Kimbolton Castle in which the Vision appears to the dying Katharine shows Fletcher at his highest and best. Dr. Johnson, who was unaware of any authorship other than Shakespearc's, described this as—

'above any other part of Shakespeare's tragedies, and perhaps above any scene of any other poet, tender and pathetic, without gods, or furies, or poisons, or precipices, without the help of romantic circumstances, without improbable sallies of poetical lamentation and without any throes of tumultuous misery.'

Regarding the Stage Direction specifying the Vision, Malone wrote: 'Of this Stage Direction I do not believe our author wrote one word.' In which he was possibly right, although so shrewd a critic as Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch holds the opposite view.



## CHAPTER V

## THE AUTHOR'S USE OF THE CHRONICLES

THE historical guides used by the authors of *Henry VIII* were Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland*; Hall's *Chronicle*; *The Life of Cardinal Wolsey*, by his gentleman-usher, George Cavendish; and *The Acts and Monuments of the Church*, by John Foxe, generally known as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

Raphaël Holinshed, or Hollingshed, was an obscure clergyman who died between 1580 and 1584. In the compilation of the *Chronicles* called by his name he bore a leading part, but he received extensive and important aid from Stow, the antiquary; William Harrison, chaplain to Lord Cobham; Hooker (*alias* Vowell), an uncle of the author of that name; and Francis Boteville, a learned antiquary. They form a complete history of Great Britain from the landing of the legendary Brutus down to the year 1577, the date of the first edition. The pages covering the early part of the reign of Elizabeth contained matter so displeasing to that sovereign and her court that in the second edition, edited and enlarged, and brought up to date by Abraham Fleming, John Hooker, Francis Thynne, and others, which appeared in 1587, after Holinshed's death, some of the sheets were omitted.

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Other works were incorporated with this Chronicle, notably a translation from the Latin of Hector Boece's history of Scotland, in which Shakespeare found the groundwork of his tragedy of *Macbeth*; portions of Edward Hall's *Chronicle, The Union of the Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke*; Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*, and Edmund Campion's appreciation of Wolsey in his *History of Ireland*.

For the Tudor period Holinshed had every opportunity for the authentic corroboration of details from persons who remembered the events he described.

Holinshed's *Chronicles* must have been Shakespeare's lifelong companion, for he drew on them for some of the earliest of his plays, *Henry VI* and *Richard III*, and went to them again for those among his last, *Cymbeline* and *Henry VIII*. The Playwright's familiarity with every part of the *Chronicles* is proved not merely by the historical dramas which he founded on them, but by actual paraphrase, and also by the frequent reminiscences of them discernible through other plays.

Edward Hall, who was some time Recorder of London, and a contemporary of Henry VIII, died in 1547. The first edition of his *Chronicle* appeared in 1542, and a further edition the year after his death, with a continuation by Richard Grafton compiled mainly from the author's MSS. It is remarkable as having probably more variations in the copies than any book in the language.

Hall's work covers a period of one hundred and fifty years, and begins with the accession of Henry

IV in 1399. It follows the tragic progress of the strife between York and Lancaster till it is brought to a close by the marriage of Henry VII with Elizabeth of York, and then shows England united and at peace under Henry VIII. The policy of King Henry is presented under a very favourable light, and Hall betrays a strong bias in favour of Protestantism.

This Chronicle is particularly valuable to the historian and also to the playwright, such as Shakespeare, since it furnishes with careful detail what is evidently the testimony of an eye-witness on several matters of interest which are neglected by other narrators.

The great Dramatist kept Hall's *Chronicle* at his elbow for constant reference in conjunction with that of Holinshed while engaged upon his seven historical plays covering the momentous period described by Hall. It was possibly the unity of theme and construction, which raises Hall's work above the dry facts of chronicle narrative, that suggested to Shakespeare the scheme of this sequence of dramas.

George Cavendish, of Glemsford, in Suffolk, entered the service of Cardinal Wolsey as gentleman-usher about 1527. While in close personal attendance on the prelate he had every opportunity of gratifying his confessed craving 'to see and be acquainted with strangers, in especial with men in honour and authority.' He was wholly devoted to Wolsey's interests and plainly enjoyed his master's closest confidence to the end. After the Cardinal's death, Cavendish was called before the Privy Council and

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closely examined as to Wolsey's latest acts and words, upon which occasion he acquitted himself so well that he was pronounced 'a just and diligent servant.'

Cavendish appears to have spent some time in taking down notes of Wolsey's conversation and movements while a member of his household, but the biography he subsequently composed with the aid of these was not completed in its final form until 1557. It did not appear in print during the author's lifetime, or for nearly a century later, but was widely circulated in MS., to one of which Shakespeare and Fletcher probably had access, although they found much of the material included by Holinshed.

The author of the history of Ireland, in which a warm appreciation of Wolsey appeared, was the celebrated English Jesuit, Edmund Campion, whose brilliant career ended at Tyburn in 1581. At the age of about thirty, early in the reign of Elizabeth, he spent some time in Ireland, as he had no sympathy with the spreading Protestantism, and while there occupied himself with writing a history of the country. In 1580 he was sent to England by Pope Gregory XIII on the propagandist mission which cost him his life.

Foxe, a Lutheran of strong views, had been tutor to the children of the poet Earl of Surrey executed by order of Henry VIII. He was protected from persecution for his opinions during the reign of Mary by his former pupil, then Duke of Norfolk. At the suggestion of Lady Jane Grey he had commenced a Latin history of the persecutions endured by

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Reformers in England, and the first outline of the work appeared in 1554. Later a complete Latin edition was published; and in 1563 the first English edition of the *Book of Martyrs*, the full title of which was :

*Actes and Monuments of these latter and perillous Dayes, touching matters of the Church, wherein are comprehended and described the great Persecution and horrible Troubles that have been wrought and practised by the Romishe Prelates, speciallye in this Realme of England and Scotland, from the yeare of our Lorde a thousande to the time now present. Gathered and collected according to the true Copies and Wrytinges certifiatorie as well of the Parties themselves that Suffered, as also out of the Bishops' Registers, which were the Doers thereof, by John Foxe.*

The work achieved instantaneous and signal popularity. The Government commanded it to be placed in each parish church; and more than any other influence it fanned the flame of that fierce hatred of Spain and the Inquisition which was a master passion of Elizabeth's reign. To Shakespeare and his contemporaries Foxe was the standard authority on the history of the Reformation in England, and to him they turned inevitably for particulars of the lives of the churchmen and others concerned. To-day, however, there are critics of the *Book of Martyrs* who do not admit that it has any historical value.

Polydore Virgil, 'an infamous, fawning, sycophant, Italian libellor', as an 18th century commentator and historian describes him, supplied a few minor

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points in the mass of material used by the authors of *Henry VIII*. He was in England when some of the circumstances related in the play took place and recorded them in a history of this country upon which he was engaged. He had commenced this *Historia Anglica* as early as 1505 at the instance of Henry VII, but did not complete it until 1533, when he dedicated it to Henry VIII. Twenty-six books were published in Basle the following year, and the twenty-seventh book, covering the reign of Henry VIII down to the birth of Edward VI in October, 1536, was added to the third edition in 1555, the year in which Virgil is believed to have died in Italy. This work was translated into English by Lord Herbert.

Virgil had been chamberlain to Pope Alexander VI, and came to England in the first place as deputy collector of Peter's pence. He held several clerical appointments in this country, and was appointed Archdeacon of Wells and a Prebendary of St. Paul's. It was his custom during nearly forty years residence in England to make daily notes on contemporary events. His hatred of Wolsey, against whom he bore a grudge, is evident; and the accusation has been levelled at this chronicler that he destroyed valuable MSS., and purloined books from libraries lest errors in his history should be discovered. On the other hand, it must be admitted that he preserved many interesting details of his time, which would otherwise have been lost.

In none of Shakespeare's chronicle dramas are Holinshed and his other authorities followed so

closely as in *Henry VIII*. Several of the scenes in which the plot shows development are literal transcriptions from the original text, in some instances inserted as Stage Directions. It is easy to trace Hall in the spectacular parts of the play, and Holinshed in the more serious passages.

The leading characters are presented as they are described in the histories. Wolsey and Queen Katharine are taken bodily from Holinshed and Cavendish; King Henry is deduced from Holinshed's account of his actions and speeches; Holinshed's conception of the Duke of Buckingham has also been adopted, with side-lights from Polydore Virgil.

Foxe drew a clear picture of Cranmer; and the following analysis of Gardiner in his *Acts and Monuments* suggests the source from which Shakespeare and Fletcher obtained their accurate judgment of the Bishop's personality:

'He was of a proude stomake, and high minded, in his owne opinion and conceite flatteryng himself to much; in wit craftie and subtil: towards his superiour flatteryng and fair-spoken; to his inferiors fierce; against his equal stout and envious, namely if in judgment and sentence hee anything withstode him.'

In analysing the degree to which the authors are closely indebted to their authorities, Holinshed and Cavendish hold first place. Holinshed is followed in the arrest of Buckingham; in the examination of the surveyor, and the reversal of the decree for the taxing of the commons in the same scene. Several circumstances narrated by the chronicler have

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suggested dialogue, notably that between Wolsey and Cardinal Campeius regarding the King's late secretary, Doctor Pace, in Act II, Scene 2; and the details of the accusations against Wolsey made by the Earl of Surrey and his supporters when they demand the Great Seal, Act III, Scene 2. A number of passages are actually Holinshed's words rendered into blank verse,—an easy method of composition which Shakespeare had adopted in previous history plays and the classical pieces based on Plutarch.

Historic detail was carefully adhered to. The Garter King-at-Arms opens the final scene with the words:

'Heaven, from thy endless goodness, send prosperous life,  
long, and ever happy, to the high and mighty princess of  
England, Elizabeth!'

V. 5. 1-4.

Sir Sidney Lee points out that these lines are taken with little change from Holinshed's account of the christening of Princess Elizabeth.

Whether the authors read a manuscript copy of Cavendish's life of Wolsey, or took their material from that edition of Holinshed's *Chronicles* which incorporates the other writer's biography, is a matter for conjecture. Material in the play, often ascribed to Holinshed, was originally due to Cavendish. This has reference particularly to incidents in the life of the great Cardinal, and descriptions of scenes at which Cavendish himself had been present in attendance on him. Such included the banquet at York Place, the trial of Queen Katharine, the dis-



cussion between the Queen and the Cardinals at Bridewell Palace, the demand of the Great Seal from Wolsey by the Dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk, and the circumstances which preceded the death of the fallen favourite.

Cavendish was an honest biographer and, although a fervent admirer of Wolsey, was often very frank in his criticism. He had the gift of vivid descriptive writing, which renders his narrative much more interesting than the usual historical chronicle. For spectacular stage productions of *Henry VIII*, Cavendish's history is generally used to augment the Stage Directions.

The grand festival at York Place is so clearly described by the contemporary historian, and so minutely copied by the dramatists, that there is no difficulty in conveying an exact picture of the order of the entertainment as it actually occurred, with the interruption caused by the arrival of the King and his twelve attendant nobles, masked and disguised as shepherds, escorted by sixteen torch-bearers, and accompanied by drums and fifes. It was Henry's pleasant custom thus to surprise [sic] the Cardinal and his guests.

Cavendish's account of the scene enacted on these occasions is graphic :

'And when it pleased the king's majesty, for his recreation, to repair unto the cardinal's house, as he did divers times in the year, at which time there wanted no preparation, or goodly furniture, with viands of the finest sort that might be provided for money or friendship. Such pleasures were then devised for the king's comfort and consolation,

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as might be invented, or by man's wit imagined. The banquets were set forth, with masks and mummeries, in so gorgeous a sort, and costly manner, that it was a heaven to behold. There wanted no dames, or damsels, meet or apt to dance with the maskers, or to garnish the place for the time, with other goodly disports. Then was there all kind of music and harmony set forth, with excellent voices both of men and children. I have seen the king suddenly come in thither in a mask, with a dozen of other maskers, all in garments like shepherds, made of fine cloth of gold and fine crimson satin paned, and caps of the same, with visors of good proportion of visnomy; their hairs, and beards, either of fine gold wire, or else of silver, and some being of black silk; having sixteen torch bearers, besides their drums, and other persons attending upon them, with visors, and clothed in satin of the same colours. And at his coming, and before he came into the hall, ye shall understand, that *he came by water to the watergate, without any noise*; where, against his coming, were laid charged many chambers (small cannons), and at his landing they were all shot off, which made such a rumble in the air, that it was like thunder. It made all the noblemen, ladies, and gentlewomen, to muse what it should mean coming so suddenly, they sitting quietly at a solemn banquet; under this sort: First, ye shall perceive that the tables were set in the chamber of presence, banquetwise covered, my Lord Cardinal sitting under the cloth of estate, and there having his service all alone; and then was there set a lady and a nobleman, or a gentleman and a gentlewoman, throughout all the tables in the chamber on the one side, which were made and joined as it were but one table. All which order and device was done and devised by the Lord Sands, Lord Chamberlain to the king, and also by Sir Henry Guildford, Comptroller to the king. Then immediately after this great shot of guns, the Cardinal desired the Lord

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Chamberlain, and Comptroller, to look what this sudden shot should mean, as though he knew nothing of the matter. They thereupon looking out of the windows into the Thames, returned again, and showed him, that it seemed to them there should be some noblemen and strangers arrived at his bridge, as ambassadors from some foreign prince. With that, quoth the Cardinal, "I shall desire you, because ye can speak French, to take the pains to go down into the hall to encounter and to receive them, according to their estates, and to conduct them into this chamber, where they shall see us, and all these noble personages setting merrily at our banquet, desiring them to set down with us, and to take part of our fare and pastime." Then (they) went incontinent down into the hall, where they received them with twenty new torches, and conveyed them up into the chamber, with such a number of drums and fifes as I have seldom seen together, at one time in any masque. At their arrival into the chamber, two and two together, they went directly before the Cardinal where he sat, saluting him very reverently; to whom the Lord Chamberlain for them said: "Sir, for as much as they be strangers, and can speak no English, they have desired me to declare unto your grace thus: they, having understanding of this your triumphant banquet, where was assembled such a number of excellent fair dames, could do no less, under the supportation of your good grace, but to repair hither to view as well their incomparable beauty, as for to *accompany them at mumschance*, and then after to dance with them, and so have of them acquaintance. And, sir, they furthermore require of your grace license to accomplish the cause of their repair." To whom the Cardinal answered, that he was very well contented they should so do. . . . Then quoth the Cardinal to my Lord Chamberlain, "I pray you," quoth he, "Show them that it seemeth me that there should be among them

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some nobleman, whom I suppose to be much more worthy of honour to sit and occupy this room and place than I; to whom I would most gladly, if I knew him, surrender my place according to my duty." Then spake my Lord Chamberlain unto them in French, declaring my Lord Cardinal's mind, and they rounding him again in the ear, my Lord Chamberlain said to my Lord Cardinal, "Sir, they confess," quoth he, "That among them there is such a noble personage, whom if your grace can appoint him from the other, he is contented to disclose himself, and to accept your place some worthily." With that the Cardinal, taking a good advertisement among them, at the last, quoth he, "Me seemeth the gentleman with the black beard should be even he." And with that he rose out of his chair, and offered the same to the gentleman in the black beard, with his cap in his hand. The person to whom he offered then his chair was Sir Edward Neville, a comely knight of a goodly personage, that much more resembled the king's person in that mask, than any other. The king's hearing and perceiving the Cardinal so deceived in his estimation and choice, could not forbear laughing; but plucked down his visor, and Master Neville's also, and dashed out with such a pleasant countenance and cheer, that all noble estates there assembled, seeing the king to be there amongst them, rejoiced very much. . . . Then came in a new banquet before the king's majesty, and to all the rest through the tables, wherein I suppose, were served two hundred dishes or above, of wondrous costly meats and devices, subtilly devised. Thus passed they forth the whole night with banqueting, dancing, and other triumphant devices, to the great comfort of the king, and pleasant regard of the nobility there assembled.'—(Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*.)

In his production of the play at the Princess's

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Theatre in 1855, Charles Kean followed Cavendish in the disposition of the stage at the trial of Queen Katharine. A comparison of Shakespeare's trial scene and Cavendish's account of this event proves that the Playwright practically transcribed the biographer's words. The order and procedure of the court are carefully followed, and Katharine's appeal to the King converted into blank verse :

' . . . she said in effect, in broken English, as followeth :  
" Sir," quoth she, " I beseech you for all the loves that hath been between us, and for the love of God, let me have justice and right; take of me some pity and compassion, for I am a poor woman and a stranger born out of your dominion; I have here no assured friend, and much less indifferent counsel; I flee to you as to the head of justice within this realm. Alas! Sir, wherein have I offended you? or what occasion of displeasure? Have I deigned against your will and pleasure; intending (as I perceive) to put me from you? I take God and all the world to witness, that I have been to you a true, humble, and obedient wife, ever conformable to your will and pleasure, that never said or did anything to the contrary thereof, being always well pleased and contented with all things wherein you had any delight or dalliance, whether it were in little or much, I never grudged in word or countenance, or showed a visage or spark of discontentation. I loved all those whom ye loved only for your sake, whether I had cause or no; and whether they were my friends or my enemies. This twenty years I have been your true wife or more, and by me ye have had divers children, although it hath pleased God to call them out of this world, which hath been no default in me.

' " And when ye had me at the first, I take God to be my

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judge, I was a true maid without touch of man; and whether it be true or no, I put it to your conscience. If there be any just cause by the law that ye can allege against me, either of dishonesty or any other impediment to banish and put me from you, I am well content to depart to my great shame and dishonour; and if there be none, then here I most lowly beseech you let me remain in my former estate, and receive justice at your hands. The king your father was in the time of his reign of such estimation through the world for his excellent wisdom, that he was accounted and called of all men the second Solomon, and my father, Ferdinand, King of Spain, who was esteemed to be one of the wittiest princes that reigned in Spain, many years before, were both wise and excellent kings in wisdom and princely behaviour. It is not, therefore, to be doubted, but that they elected and gathered as wise counsellors about them as to their high discretions was thought meet. Also, as me seemeth, there was in those days as wise, as well as learned men, and men of as good judgment as be at this present in both realms, who thought then the marriage between you and me good and lawful. Therefore it is a wonder to hear what new inventions are now invented against me, that never intended but honesty. And cause me to stand to the order and judgment of this new court, wherein ye may do me much wrong, if ye intend any cruelty; for ye may condemn me for lack of sufficient answer, having no indifferent council, but such as be assigned me, with whose wisdom and learning I am not acquainted. Ye must consider that they cannot be indifferent counsellors for my part which be your subjects, and taken out of your own council before, wherein they be made privy, and dare not, for your displeasure, disobey your will and intent, being once made privy thereto. Therefore I most humbly require you, in the way of charity, and for the love of God, who is the just judge, to spare

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me the extremity of this new court, until I may be advertised what way and order my friends in Spain will advise me to take. And if ye will not extend to me so much indifferent favour, your pleasure then be fulfilled, and to God I commit my cause! ”’

Cavendish reports how this speech was followed by the Queen's immediate retirement, ‘leaning upon the arm of her general receiver, called Master Griffith.’

The conversation which then took place between the King and Wolsey, according to Cavendish, is also given by Shakespeare.

“‘For as much,” quoth he (the King), “as the queen is gone, I will, in her absence, declare unto you all my lords here presently assembled, she hath been to me as true, as obedient, and as conformable a wife as I could in my fantasy wish or desire. She hath all the virtuous qualities that ought to be in a woman of her dignity, or in any other baser estate. Surely she is also a noble woman born, if nothing were in her, but only her conditions will well declare the same.” With that quoth my Lord Cardinal, “Sir, I most humbly beseech your highness to declare me before all this audience, whether I have been the chief inventor or first mover of this matter unto your majesty; for I am greatly suspected of all men herein.” “My Lord Cardinal,” quoth the king, “I can well excuse you herein. Marry (quoth he), ye have been rather against me in attempting or setting forth thereof. And to put you all out of doubt, I will declare unto you the special cause that moved me hereunto; it was a certain scrupulosity that pricked my conscience upon divers words that were spoken at a certain time by the Bishop of Bayonne, the French King's Ambassador, who had been long upon the

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debating of the conclusion of a marriage to be concluded between the princess, our daughter Mary, and the Duke of Orléans, the French king's second son. . . ."

—(Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*.)

Shakespeare was misled by Cavendish in speaking of the Bishop of Bayonne as the French Ambassador in the matter of the royal proposal of marriage. The Ambassador in question was the Bishop of Tarbes.

Cavendish himself was present at the momentous interview between Queen Katharine and the Cardinals after the trial. He noticed that when the Queen came out of her privy chamber to meet her distinguished visitors in 'the chamber of presence', she had 'a skein of white thread about her neck.' The author of Scene 1 of Act III has transcribed the conversation as Cavendish heard it almost word for word. The biographer concludes:

' . . . she took my lord by the hand and led him into her privy chamber, with the other cardinal; where they were in long communication: we, in the other chamber, might sometimes here the queen speak very loud, but what it was we could not understand.'

In Cavendish also, Shakespeare (or Fletcher) found the original wording of Wolsey's touching avowal:

'Had I but served my God with half the zeal  
I served my king, he would not in mine age  
Have left me naked to mine enemies.'

III. 2. 455-57.

The gentleman-usher recorded his master's words:



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“Well, well, Master Kingston,” quoth he, “I see the matter against me how it is framed; but if I had served God as diligently as I have done the king, he would not have given me over in my grey hairs.”

In the play, however, the remark is addressed to Cromwell.

With Wolsey's passing from the scene, Cavendish's assistance is no more required.

The chronicler Hall supplied the details of the state processions and spectacular events. He has filled his history of the reign of Henry VIII with the most elaborate accounts of tournaments, coronations, marriages and christenings. He was some twenty years old when he was present at the Field of the Cloth of Gold, described by the Duke of Norfolk in the first scene, and revels in particularising dress and appointments on that memorable occasion. Hall again made full use of his opportunities in describing minutely the ceremonies of Anne Boleyn and the christening of the Princess Elizabeth. In *Henry VIII* his account is followed in the words of a gentleman onlooker at the coronation, and also in the Stage Directions for the exact order of the two processions.

The condemnation and subsequent behaviour of the Duke of Buckingham are given by Hall, and the authors of the play adhered closely to his account of the Duke's speech after his sentence:

‘The Duke of Buckingham said,—“My Lord of Norfolk, you have said as a traitor should be said unto, but I was never none; but, my lords, I nothing malign for that you

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have done to me, but the eternal God forgive you my death, as I do : I shall never sue to the king for life, howbeit he is a gracious prince, and more grace may come from him than I desire. I desire you, my lords, and all my fellows to pray for me."

'Then was the edge of the axe turned towards him; and so led into a barge. Sir Thomas Lovell desired him to sit on the cushions and carpet ordained for him; he said, "Nay, for when I went to Westminster, I was Duke of Buckingham; now I am but Edward Bohun, the most caitiff of the world."'(Hall's *Chronicle*.)

It was also noticed by Gerald Massey, in his book on Shakespeare's Sonnets, that some words of Essex spoken before his execution may have supplied suggestions for Buckingham's speech after his arraignment.

Polydore Virgil supplied the wording of Queen Katharine's letter to the King, of which the substance is also in Holinshed.

For the dramatic scenes of the feud between Cranmer and Gardiner at the end of the play, Shakespeare and his collaborator went to Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of the Christian Martyrs*, from which they adopted the incidents without variation and transcribed several passages into dialogue with much liberality. The King's championship of Cranmer is related by Foxe, who gives an account of Henry's promise of his protection, and the arraignment of Cranmer before his accusers in the Council.

In Foxe's *Acts* Cranmer's enemies warn the King that tolerance of heresy might call forth 'horrible commotions and uprores like in some partes of

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Germanie it did not long agoe,' probably referring to the fanatical outbreak in Thuringia and Saxony, led by Thomas Münzer, the Anabaptist pastor of Mühlhausen, in 1525. In the play this is paraphrased in Gardiner's speech in which he prophesies that tolerance of heresy would be followed by:

' Commotions, uproars, with a general taint  
Of the whole state: as of late days our neighbours,  
The upper Germany, can dearly witness,  
Yet freshly pitied in our memories.'

V. 3. 28-31.

Lines here and there in the more important speeches are reminiscent of other sources. The library of authorities at the disposal of the associated playwrights was probably as extensive as the literary production of the period would allow. Wide reading may have caused their memories to retain turns of phrase, if no more.

Wolsey's famous soliloquy beginning: ' Farewell! a long farewell, to all my greatness! ' concludes with the lines:

' And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,  
Never to hope again'.

III. 2. 371-72.

In Churchyard's *Legend of Cardinal Wolsey, Mirrour for Magistrates*, which appeared in 1587, is to be found:

' Your fault not half so great as was my pride,  
For which offence fell Lucifer from the skies.'

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And in *The Life and Death of Thomas Wolsey, etc.*, a poem written in 1599 by Tho. Storer, student of Christ Church, Oxford, the Cardinal expresses himself in similar strain:

‘ If once we fall, we fall Colossus-like,  
We fall at once, like pillars of the sunne.’

## THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY

### CHAPTER VI

#### THE HISTORICAL ACCURACY OF THE INCIDENTS

THE extent to which the tragedy of Katharine was brought about by political intrigue, spread over many years, is not apparent in this play, in which Henry's personal scruples, and later his passion for Anne Boleyn, are emphasised, and, indeed, might be the sole reasons.

This Spanish princess worked all her life for Spain and Spanish prestige. When that last of those medieval centuries of feudalism, the 15th, merged into the dawning 16th, which was to see the Reformation and the beginning of modern Europe, this continent was split by the rivalry and ambition of dynasts, the Pope, Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, Maximilian of Germany, Louis XII of France, and Henry VII of England. From her parents, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Arragon, Katharine had imbibed her strong purpose—Spain as the chief power in Europe. To those indomitable rulers the momentous event of the discovery of America by Columbus and the disposal by marriage of their progeny were merely means to an end. Katharine was their youngest child. Her sister, Joanna, was married to Maximilian's son, Philip the Handsome, a powerful Hapsburg-Arragon

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connection ; two others married, one after the other, Manuel of Portugal ; her brother Juan was united to Margaret of Austria ; and to cement the goodwill of England it was agreed between the respective parents that Katharine ought to be wedded to Arthur, Prince of Wales, although, comparatively, this was not so important an alliance for Spain. That calculating and astute king, Henry VII, employed his own children in exactly the same spirit as his fellow dynasts, and the Spanish infanta's princely dower was a prize he greatly desired.

At less than sixteen years old, therefore, a mere pawn in the great game of Europe, this princess arrived a stranger in England, unable to speak the language, to be married with all pomp to a youthful bridegroom a few months her junior. She was a widow at seventeen, and for years the question was fiercely debated between Spain and England whether she should, with her dower, be returned to Spain, or become the bride of the next heir to the English throne, Prince Henry.

At the age of twelve Henry was actually betrothed to Katharine ; but, with the death of her determined mother a year later, she was no longer a bargain, her father-in-law began to consider whether a better marriage could not be arranged for his son, and the position became intolerable to the proud-natured princess. She was slighted and humiliated, and allowed to go short of money. In a letter addressed to her father, who had his own immediate troubles and was indifferent to hers, she wrote pitifully :

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‘For the love of our Lord, consider how I am your daughter. I have nothing for chemises; wherefore, by your Highness’s life, I have now sold some bracelets to get a dress of black velvet, for I was all but naked: since I departed from Spain I have nothing except two new dresses, for till now those I have brought from there have lasted me; although now I have nothing but the brocade dresses. On this account I supplicate you Highness to command to remedy this; for certainly I shall not be able to live in this manner.’

Finally, on his deathbed in 1509, Henry VII counselled his son to marry Katharine, and the handsome young king of eighteen took as his bride his brother’s widow, six years older than himself. And so at last the unhappy Spaniard gained the reward of her long waiting, her hopes and disappointments.

At first Henry leagued himself with Spain in the politics of Europe, but Ferdinand’s truce with France after the successful English campaign against that country enraged his son-in-law and ally, who proceeded to vent his anger on Ferdinand’s daughter and partisan, and revile her father’s treachery to himself. The fact that of the several children Katharine had borne to him none so far had survived was also a very sore point.

“It is said,” wrote a Venetian who had heard rumours in the Vatican, “that the King of England means to repudiate his present wife, the daughter of the King of Spain, and his brother’s widow, because he is unable to have children by her, and intends to marry a daughter of the French Duke of Bourbon.”

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England's policy was now completely reversed. An alliance was sought with the former enemy, France, and as a preliminary, Henry proceeded to marry his sister, Mary, to the old King, Louis XII. Katharine, who had hoped to see the young princess wed to her nephew, Charles, the son of her sister, Joanna, and the Archduke Philip, was again grievously disappointed in her efforts for Spain. The birth of a daughter, afterwards Queen Mary Tudor, in 1516, for a time restored Henry's good humour towards his Queen.

Louis XII and Ferdinand of Arragon both died; and Cardinal Wolsey, then at the height of his power and influence over the King, opposed the friendship with France. When the French King, Francis I, invaded Italy, Henry found cause to distrust him and fear his ambition. Maximilian, Henry, Francis and the Pope duped each other without conscience; and the English King, who had begun his reign with such high hopes of making himself a dominant power, was becoming suspicious and embittered by the treachery of both friends and enemies. As a matter of fact, Maximilian, with his grandson, Charles, the King of Spain and Naples, and Francis, were each bidding for Italy, and made terms with the Pope or with England as expediency seemed to justify, only to break their treaties when circumstances altered.

During the war with France, Wolsey, as Master Almoner, had gathered the reins of supply into his hands, and his activities had grown until he had become the most important personage in the



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kingdom. But his ambitions extended beyond the Lord Chancellorship and other high honours bestowed upon him by his grateful friend and sovereign. He aimed at no less than the Papal crown; and in his determination to win this he was prepared to support the Spanish interests against France, and then France against Maximilian and Charles, according to their usefulness towards himself and his object. Wolsey was a brilliant statesman and international diplomatist, and used his abilities to such purpose that for his anti-French sympathies he received the Cardinal's hat. Then he propitiated France to the extent that a new alliance was made, and Katharine had the chagrin of seeing her little daughter, Mary, betrothed to the French dauphin through Wolsey's diplomacy.

It was at this juncture that Charles of Spain was elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, which gave him all Spain and, since the death of his grandfather, Maximilian, Austro-Germany, and a footing in Italy, and made him ruler over a large portion of Europe. To Henry he applied for a loan of 150,000 ducats. The situation was tantalising, and one for which Wolsey had used his statecraft. Both Francis and Charles desired the goodwill of England; and in the great Cardinal's mind was the thought that to gain his interest the Emperor would have to promise him the Papacy.

On the Field of the Cloth of Gold, so-called from the extravagant magnificence displayed, King Henry of England met Francis I of France in cordial friendship. At the same time Wolsey was receiving

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a retaining fee of 7,000 ducats a year from the Emperor Charles, and felt that he held the fate of Europe in his grasp as well as the triple crown. It was even secretly suggested that Charles should be the Princess Mary's future husband in place of the Dauphin. In every way in her power Katharine resisted the French *entente*.

And then war broke out once more between France and the Empire. Both parties appealed, not to Henry of England, but to Wolsey. The statesman Cardinal's hour was about to strike, the hour for which he had so carefully planned. He saw himself the umpire of the states of Europe, with the strength of England's 10,000 horse and 30,000 foot in his gift, and his price the Papacy.

The Emperor Charles agreed to the terms, and so the secret treaty against the French was concluded, and the invasion of France in alliance with Spain and Austria pushed with enthusiasm.

Pope Leo died suddenly, and Wolsey's hopes rose. But the conclave of Cardinals at Rome, dismayed at the number of conflicting interests, elected Adrian of Utrecht. The new Pope only lived two years, however; and again Wolsey anxiously awaited the result of the ensuing election, for the dominant voice in it was that of the Emperor Charles. Guilio de Medici was elected as Pope Clement VII, and the English Cardinal's house of cards had fallen. In his rage and chagrin he gave vent to his anger in his words to the imperial ambassador: "The Emperor is a liar!" he exclaimed, "A liar, observing no manner of faith or promise; the Lady

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Margaret (of Austria) is a bawd; Ferdinand, the Emperor's brother, a child, and so governed; and the Duke of Bourbon a traitor."

The Emperor's aunt, Queen Katharine, Wolsey regarded as a sympathiser with the opposition party and no friend to himself.

Meanwhile phenomenal success had attended the Austro-Spanish and English forces against King Francis, and Katharine was full of triumph at her beloved nephew's progress. But between Charles the Emperor and the English Cardinal relations were cool; and this coolness soon spread to international politics, culminating in a breach when, repudiating his mooted betrothal to the nine year old Princess Mary, Charles wed Isabella of Portugal, his cousin, with a million ducat dowry. It was the end of the Anglo-Spanish *entente*, and the tide had definitely turned. Katharine, the Queen, was a Spaniard, and she had given the King no son to succeed him. As a political pawn she now had no value; indeed, she stood in the way of a possible alliance with France.

Francis was prepared to offer his sister to Henry had he been free to wed her, and so the idea of the possible annulment of the marriage first arose. But the King had overlooked the important fact that Pope Clement, who alone could annul marriages, was a creature of the Emperor, and Katharine was the Emperor's aunt. Such were the complicated intrigues and events that led up to the situation with which Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* opens.

Historically the incidents in this play extend

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over a period of twenty-four years, commencing immediately after the return of the court from the 'Field of the Cloth of Gold' in the year 1520, the eleventh of Henry's reign, when that sovereign was just thirty years old. The attack on Cranmer was made in 1544, after the establishment of the Reformation.

During this epoch there was the war against France, with England in alliance with Austria and Spain, and then the break with those treacherous allies. Henry earned from Pope Leo X the title, ever since borne by our monarchs, of 'Defender of the Faith' for his treatise against Luther; and then, thwarted by Rome over his intended divorce of Katharine, he turned in anger to Parliament, and with the assistance of that body proceeded to eliminate the power of the Church and break off all connection with the Holy See. The Dissolution of the Monasteries followed.

The authors of *Henry VIII* ignore these significant happenings, however, and greatly condense the events of the most momentous years of the 16th century. They are concerned with incidents which more nearly affect personalities of the time: (1) the execution of Buckingham; (2) the divorce of Katharine; (3) the fall of Wolsey; (4) the triumph of Cranmer. In their anxiety to present these in the most suitable dramatic form, great freedom is shown in the treatment of the chronological sequence. A number of incidents are transposed. For example, we are carried forward to 1544 with Cranmer's arraignment before the council, and

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immediately brought back to 1533, when the Princess Elizabeth was born.

The principal deviations are as follows: The reversal of the decree for taxing the commons (1525) and the examination of Buckingham's Surveyor (1521) occur in one scene. The banqueting scene (1527) precedes that of Buckingham's condemnation (1521); in the latter of which is introduced mention of the King's scruples regarding his marriage (1527), and of the arrival of the papal legate (1528). The scene in which Anne Boleyn is advanced to the dignity of Marchioness of Pembroke (1532) precedes that of the legatine court (1529). In the same scene in which the birth of Elizabeth (1533) is announced to the King, he promises to protect Cranmer against the charge of heresy (1544), and subsequently invites him to stand godfather to the infant princess (1533). The play opens with mis-statements on the part of the Dukes of Buckingham and Norfolk regarding their presence at the Field of the Cloth of Gold:

*Buckingham:*

'An untimely ague

Stay'd me a prisoner in my chamber when

Those suns of glory, those two lights of men,

Met in the vale of Andren.

*Norfolk:*

'Twixt Guynes and Arde:

I was then present, saw them salute on horseback;

Beheld them, when they 'lighted, how they clung

In their embracement, as they grew together;

Which had they, what four throned ones could have

Such a compounded one? weigh'd

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*Buckingham:*

All the whole time  
I was my chamber's prisoner.

*Norfolk:*

Then you lost  
The view of earthly glory: . . .'  
I. i. 4-14.

As a matter of fact, the Duke of Norfolk was not present at this historic meeting. On the other hand, the Duke of Buckingham took part in it, and was not at the time, as Shakespeare relates, his 'chamber's prisoner.'

Later, Norfolk says:

'For France hath flaw'd the league, and hath attach'd  
Our merchants' goods at Bourdeaux.'  
I. i. 95-96.

Actually this breach did not take place until March of 1522, nearly two years after the interview between the two kings, and about a year after this supposed conversation on the day of Buckingham's arrest (April, 1521). In the play the arrest happens while the Duke is with the Duke of Norfolk and Lord Abergavenny in an antechamber at Bridewell Palace; and it is a Sergeant-at-Arms, directed by Brandon, who arrests him. History relates that Buckingham was summoned from Gloucestershire to London; but it was not until his arrival at Windsor that he discovered he was under restraint. He hastened to the Cardinal's house, but Wolsey would not be seen; and when the Duke returned to his

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barge, he was arrested by Sir Henry Marney, Captain of the King's Guard, and conveyed to the Tower. He was beheaded, 17th May, 1521. The Pope's Legate on account of the divorce proceedings is made to arrive in England at the time of Buckingham's fall, whereas he did not come until nearly eight years afterwards.

It is a fact of history that Wolsey disapproved of Henry's desire to divorce his first wife, although he had no love for the Spaniards and Spanish interests. But he was not strong enough to oppose it, and in order to retain the royal favour lent himself to one device after another for securing the divorce, on the ground that the King's marriage with his brother's widow was against Levitical law. The Pope's Legate, Campeggio, (the Campcius of Shakespeare), tried to induce first Henry and then Katharine to give way. Failing with both, and having exhausted all methods of delay, he opened his court on 31st May, 1529. Katharine appeared before it on the 18th of June and protested against its jurisdiction. The King then demanded judgment. After a dignified petition to his better feelings, Katharine appealed to Rome. On July 23rd Campeggio found an excuse for adjourning the commission for two months. The Pope recalled him, and transferred the hearing of the cause to Rome. To Wolsey this meant ruin. He had only maintained his position by subservience to his royal master and Anne Boleyn's party. All the King's wrath at the failure of his design was vented upon him.

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King Henry had begun to listen to the accounts of Wolsey's extortions and reproached him in severe terms. But the Cardinal craftily turned aside the King's anger by presenting him with his superb palace of Hampton Court. The Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, with Lord Rochford, Anne Boleyn's father, redoubled their efforts, imputing the refusal of the Pope regarding the divorce wholly to Wolsey's private machinations. The two former lords were sent to demand from him the Great Seal, which he refused to deliver until he should receive written command from the King. An impeachment passed the House of Lords, but was opposed with such courage and eloquence by Thomas Cromwell that no charge of treason was then substantiated.

At the commencement of Michaelmas Term, 1529, Wolsey was served with a writ of *praemunire*. He admitted the charge 'of which he was technically guilty, in as much as he had received bulls from the Pope without formal license.' The court pronounced sentence, 'that he was out of the protection of the law, that his lands, goods, and chattels were forfeited, and his person at the mercy of the King.' He was ordered to return to Esher, a country house belonging to the see of Winchester, and was so closely shorn of all magnificence as to want some of the ordinary comforts of life.

In the year 1530 he was pardoned and restored to his Archbishopric of York. He went to Cawood Castle in September, 1530, where he employed himself in magnificent preparations for his instalment on the archiepiscopal throne. But the Duke of



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Norfolk and his other enemies were still at work. It was discovered that he had applied to the King of France for his intercession, and this led to his final disgrace. The Earl of Northumberland received orders to arrest and bring him to London on a charge of high treason. It was on this journey that Wolsey died at Leicester on 30th November of the same year.

The circumstance of the King's becoming incensed against Wolsey by the discovery of his great wealth detailed in an inventory, described in Scene 2 of Act III, is unsupported by historical evidence. It is, however, an incident in which the Cardinal played a part involving a rival churchman, recorded by Holinshed. Thomas Ruthall, Bishop of Durham, was, after the death of King Henry VII, a member of Henry VIII's privy council, and the King commissioned him to compile an estimate of the whole estate of the kingdom. Wolsey was instructed by the King to fetch the book in which everything was detailed. The Bishop having made two lists, the one for the King, and the other a statement of his personal property, had them bound in similar vellum covers. When the Cardinal came for the report, the Bishop sent a servant to look for a certain volume bound in white vellum. But, inadvertently, the book setting forth the Bishop's own estate was brought, and, undetected, handed to Wolsey, who soon discovered the mistake which had been made. But instead of returning it to the owner, he seized the occasion to bring about the latter's disgrace with the King and his own preferment. He put

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the book in Henry's hands, explained the contents and suggested that if at any time the royal coffers needed filling the Bishop's could doubtless supply all that was necessary. The shock of the discovery of his error brought Bishop Ruthall to his deathbed; and the Cardinal, who had for some time coveted the rich bishopric of Durham, attained his desire.

The great question of the divorce was not completed until after Wolsey's death. A convocation of the Province of Canterbury declared the marriage to be contrary to the Will of God; and in May, 1533, Archbishop Cranmer pronounced judicially that the union was void. Henry had already secretly married Anne Boleyn in January of that year.

In *Henry VIII* Queen Katharine hears of the death of Wolsey shortly before her own death. The facts are that the Princess Dowager, as she was titled, outlived the Cardinal more than five years, dying at Kimbolton Castle in the early part of 1536, only six months previous to the execution of her successor.

At the time of Wolsey's banquet at York Place in Scene 4, Act I, Anne Boleyn was really in attendance upon Queen Claude of France, wife of Francis I, and her age would not have been more than fifteen or sixteen. She returned to England at a later date. She danced with the King at an entertainment given by himself in honour of the French ambassadors at Greenwich Palace in May, 1527. Their acquaintance was then probably in its first stage. She was not created Marchioness of Pembroke until September, 1532. The remark of the Lord Chamberlain in Act III, Scene 2, 'The king

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already hath married the fair lady,' and the Duke of Suffolk's 'There's order given for her coronation,' are historically premature by more than three years.

The christening of the future Protestant Queen Elizabeth was solemnized with all the rites of the Church of Rome at the Grey Friars, Greenwich, in September, 1533, three days after her birth, her mother being then in residence at the Old Palace at Greenwich. The Stage Directions make it appear that Bridewell Palace is meant throughout Act V. Archbishop Cranmer's arraignment before the council of his accusers in Act V, Scene 2, actually took place eleven years after this, although in the play it immediately precedes the christening ceremony.

The Lord Chamberlainship changed hands during the period covered by the plot, although there is no indication of a change of holders in the play. In the earlier part it is the Earl of Worcester who holds this post. He died in 1526, and was succeeded by Lord Sands. Neither do the authors differentiate between the old Duke of Norfolk of Acts I and II, and his son, the Earl of Surrey, who became Duke on the death of his father in 1524. This Duke's son, the new Earl of Surrey, was not more than thirteen years of age at the time of Wolsey's downfall, so that he could not have played the part assigned to him in Act III of exulting over the proud prelate's discomfiture. He is manifestly mistaken for his father, the Duke of Buckingham's son-in-law. It was this young Earl who later became one of the most brilliant scholars of his day, the first of modern

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English verse writers, and the inventor of English blank verse. He suffered the same fate as his grandfather, his head falling on the block at the end of the reign of King Henry.

## SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VIII COMPARED

### CHAPTER VII

#### SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VIII COMPARED WITH THE HISTORICAL FIGURE

KING HENRY VIII, when he came to the throne, was an elegant paragon, handsome, brilliant, a fine scholar and an astute statesman. He was the first of our kings who was British born and bred, the son of a Welshman and an English princess, who was also wholly English on both sides. He represented in person the union between the rival red and white roses, and was the first sovereign for many a year to assume the crown with an undisputed title and without the preliminary of civil strife and political intrigue. With these advantages great things were hoped of him. Only eighteen on his accession, it is said that in appearance the young King resembled his grandfather, Edward IV, who was noted for his handsome presence. He was tall and strong, with bright complexion and short golden hair. He was an adept in all manly exercises, and encouraged sports and trials of skill. His state papers show keen perception and great power of expression. He spoke four languages; he had considerable knowledge of music, medicine, engineering, and ship building; and he was widely read in theology.

No king of England has been more eulogised, or

## WITH THE HISTORICAL FIGURE

more defamed. He is represented as the herald of the golden age, and as a lustful tyrant. How are we, four hundred years later, to judge a man whose youthful crudition was praised by Erasmus, his noble mien and his skill with the horse, the bow, and on the tennis court proclaimed by the Venetian ambassador; his initiative and statesmanship recorded by contemporary chroniclers, while at the same time so many of his deeds reveal a greedy unscrupulousness, a vacillating mind, and supreme egotism? T. Kirkup says:

‘The character of Henry has long been a stumbling-block to historians, and will always be a puzzle to such as classify mankind under the two heads of good and bad without recognising the intermediate gradations to which the vast majority belong. To many it is all the more inexplicable, because the contrast between his youth and declining manhood is so apparently complete. Yet it was a perfectly consistent, though a mixed character, and the later phases of it are only a natural development of the earlier. He was always strong-willed to excess, capricious and fickle, with the sensuous part of his nature predominating. In his youth his baser tendencies were controlled by his love of popularity, his regard for his excellent wife, his own sense of duty, and the vigorous animal spirits which found congenial play in physical exercise and in foreign war. In his maturer years he was more self-reliant and therefore less dependant on popularity; after losing his regard for Catherine, he fell into baser companionship; as his health began to fail, his boisterous spirits declined. Worst of all, his constitutional fickleness took the form of disloyalty to his successive wives, and to his friends and ministers.’

## SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VIII COMPARED

There was no more acute man of his time than Sir Thomas More, and his judgment on this side of Henry's character is shrewd. In the height of his favour with the King, after walking with him in friendly discourse in the garden at Chelsea, his sovereign holding his arm familiarly about his neck, More confessed that he felt "no cause to be proud thereof, for if my head would win him a castle in France it should not fail to go."

To a great extent Henry fulfilled the political promise of his youth. In the thirty-eight years of his reign he restored strong government with the assistance of his Star Chamber; he created England's first merchant fleet, and a navy to protect it on the high seas; he negotiated important commercial treaties, and continued his father's exertions to lay the foundation of this country's foreign trade; he entered upon a foreign policy of a modern diplomatic type rather than, as hitherto, one of warlike aggression, and was the first English king to aim at a place in the balance of power in Europe. Aided by Wolsey's brilliant and subtle diplomacy, he raised England from a third-rate position to a level with the greatest European powers.

The fact that the great revolution in established institutions and beliefs, the Reformation, took place in this reign has somewhat overshadowed other events which have had almost as far-reaching an influence on England of a later day. Henry himself was not Protestant. He remained a firm Anglo-Catholic to his death, and had no intention of adopting the faith of Luther. His opposition to the

## WITH THE HISTORICAL FIGURE

reformer won for him the title of "Defender of the Faith" from the Pope. Henry laboured to eliminate the supremacy of Rome from the English Church, and to wrest from the monastic establishments their power and possessions.

The authors of the play *Henry VIII* ignore these matters of history. Their story is concerned with the struggle between the ambitious designs of the King's councillors and Henry's own personal preferences. Pawns in this ruthless game are the two Queens. The truth about historical incidents is subordinate to the development of the characters themselves.

Henry was born at Greenwich on June 28th, 1491, the second son of Henry of Richmond and Elizabeth of York. Becoming heir to the throne on the death of his elder brother, Prince Arthur, Henry married his widowed sister-in-law, Katharine of Arragon, two months after his accession in 1509. At the commencement of the play the King was twenty-nine years old, and in the eleventh year of his reign. We have a full-length portrait of him at this time from the graphic pen of the Venetian ambassador, Giustiniani:

'His Majesty is twenty-nine years old, and extremely handsome. Nature could not have done more for him. He is much handsomer than any other sovereign of Christendom,—a good deal handsomer than the king of France,—very fair, and his whole frame admirably proportioned. On hearing that Francis I wore a red beard, he allowed his own to grow; and as it is reddish, he has now got a beard that looks like gold. He is very accomplished, a good musician, composes well, is a most capital horseman, a



## SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VIII COMPARED

fine joust, speaks good French, Latin, and Spanish, is very religious, hears three masses daily when he hunts, and sometimes five on other days. He hears the office every day in the queen's chamber,—that is to say, vesper and compline. He is very fond of hunting, and never takes his diversion without tiring eight or ten horses, which he causes to be stationed beforehand along the line of country he means to take; and when one is tired he mounts another, and before he gets home they are all exhausted. He is extremely fond of tennis, at which game it is the prettiest thing in the world to see him play, his fair skin glowing through a shirt of the finest texture.'

In the later part of the play, it should be remembered, Henry is actually an older and much grosser man. Holbein's well-known portrait in the royal collection at Windsor shows the King as he was about the year 1543, some months before Cranmer was accused by the Council. The portrait-painter has drawn a stout figure, and a cruel face with fat cheeks, a pursed mouth and lecherous eyes. At this time Henry was suffering with the mortal disease from which he died three or four years later, and was, in consequence, irritable, suspicious, and ruthless.

The intense love of pleasure and fine display, which was a characteristic of the Tudor temperament, was strongly present in this monarch. This passion for dress and pageantry is emphasised in *Henry VIII* in the Duke of Norfolk's description of the splendours at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. The Kings of England and France sought to outdo

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each other in the richness and novelty of their attire and the magnificence of their state.

Henry's high spirits and appetite for gaiety were freely indulged and encouraged by his councillors. At the same time, with this was combined an invincible self-will and an inexorable temper, intolerant of opposition. 'He is sure a prince of a royal courage,' said Wolsey on his death-bed, 'and rather than he will want any part of his will or appetite, he will put the loss of one-half of his realm in danger.'

The character portrait of the King in *Henry VIII* is probably that of tradition, a tradition of rather more than half a century. 'Shakespeare portrayed him,' says Professor Gervinus, 'without misrepresenting or disguising his cruelty, his sensuality, his caprice, his semi-refinement united with natural coarseness, but he kept them in the background.' Yet the creators of the Henry VIII of the play did not, alternatively, give the King credit for so much charm of manner and popularity among his subjects as, in fact, he possessed. His joviality, his aptitude for adapting himself to his company, and his physical prowess, combined to make him the most popular despot of his period. The personality suggested is that of an unmitigated hypocrite. In the course of the action every sympathy aroused in his favour when he has cause to distrust the Cardinal who had been his trusted friend, by his sense of justice towards his people, and in his championship of Cranmer, is immediately alienated by a sinister duplicity and fickleness.

Hazlitt, in his criticism of *Henry VIII*, thinks

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that the character of the King is overdrawn on the discreditable side: 'His gross appearance, his blustering demeanour, his vulgarity, his arrogance, his sensuality, his cruelty, his hypocrisy, his want of common decency and common humanity, are marked in strong lines.'

Speaking of the difficulties which this rôle presents to the actor, Professor Gervinus says:

'His dependence upon flatterers together with his jealous desire to rule alone; the ease with which he is deceived, together with his resentful bitterness when he sees himself deluded, and his deceitful dissimulation in suppressing malice and revenge; his caprice together with his impetuosity; his unwieldy clumsy appearance together with a certain mental refinement; his lack of feeling together with isolated traits of good nature; his sensuality under the transparent mask of religion and conscience; his manner condescending to vulgarity; all these are so many delicate contrasts, in which the player has to hit the fine line of contact.'

The Prompter of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, in his 1773 edition of *Henry VIII* advises actors that 'King Henry requires corpulent importance of person, strong, stern features, with a sonorous, powerful voice.'

Henry's attitude towards Queen Katharine at the opening of the drama is one of affectionate regard. He addresses her as 'Lady mine.'

*King:*

' . . . you have half our power :  
The other moiety, ere you ask is given ;  
Repeat your will and take it.' I. 2. 11-13.

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He is evidently greatly moved by her impassioned appeal at the trial, although he does not speak directly to her. In his tribute to her wifely virtues after she has left the court, Henry appears sincere in his affection and regret. But this is a mood which passes quickly. The sincerity is absent from his declaration to the Cardinals and Bishops:

‘ Prove but our marriage lawful, by my life  
And kingly dignity, we are contented  
To wear our mortal state to come with her,  
Katharine our queen, before the primest creature  
That’s paragon’d o’ the world.’

II. 4. 226-29.

He chafes at the delay occasioned by the adjournment of the court by the Papal Legate. Matters go too slowly for his liking, and in an aside Henry reveals his true thoughts:

‘ I may perceive  
These cardinals trifle with me : I abhor  
This dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome.’

II. 4. 235-7.

His conscience afflicts him, but only on the point most favourable to himself, namely, the doubtful matter of his marriage with his late brother’s wife. ‘ Conscience, conscience ! O, ’tis a tender place,’ he bemoans.

A summary of Henry’s true feelings is tersely expressed by the Duke of Suffolk in conversation with the Lord Chamberlain regarding the rumours of a separation :

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*Chamberlain:*

'It seems the marriage with his brother's wife  
Has crept too near his conscience.

*Suffolk:*

No, his conscience  
Has crept too near another lady.'

II. 2. 17-19.

And yet it is suggested that Henry retained an affectionate regard, and perhaps conscious regret, concerning Queen Katharine to the end. When Capucius, the Ambassador from Katharine's nephew, the Emperor Charles, visits her at Kimbolton, he tells the Queen that it is—

'The king's request that I would visit you;  
Who grieves much for your weakness, and by me  
Sends you his princely commendations,  
And heartily entreats you take good comfort.'

IV. 2. 116-19.

The King is presented as a man of hasty and intolerant temper. There is, perhaps, a cause for wonder why Henry, astute man as he undoubtedly was, and little biased by the opinions of others, should have been so easily convinced of Buckingham's treason on the mere evidence of the discharged Surveyor, who harboured a personal spite, and the supplementary comments of Wolsey, who, as he was aware, was likewise actuated by malevolence.

Henry's autocratic temper and despotic treatment of his council's deliberations, if they were

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contrary to his liking, are instanced in his dramatic pronouncement in favour of Cranmer on his appearance at the end of the Archbishop's examination in the Council Chamber. The King's rebuke of his ministers is couched in forceful language. It is an autocrat who speaks, to whom both church and law are subordinate. There is, however, at moments something majestic in the easy, leonine power of the King in the play. 'I know his noble nature,' Wolsey says after his disgrace.

A fairer estimate of his character is revealed in the incident regarding the tax imposed by Wolsey. Remorseless as Henry was when his personal interests were at stake, in matters of state he liked to adopt an attitude of magnanimity. Like all the Tudors, he had his people's welfare at heart, and had no hesitation in arbitrarily countermanding his ministers' decrees.

*King:*

'Things done well,

And with a care, exempt themselves from fear;  
Things done without example, in their issue  
Are to be fear'd. Have you a precedent  
Of this commission? I believe, not any.  
We must not rend our subjects from our laws,  
And stick them in our will. Sixth part of each?  
A trembling contribution! Why, we take  
From every tree lop, bark, and part o' the timber,  
And though we leave it with a root, thus hack'd,  
The air will drink the sap. To every county  
Where this is question'd send our letters, with  
Free pardon to each man that has denied  
The force of this commission: pray, look to't;  
I put it to your care.'

I. 2. 88-102.

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Wolsey's influence over his sovereign, and the countenance which Henry gave him, did not prevent the King from administering this sharp public rebuke when he was displeased. His disregard of the Cardinal's plausible excuse that his action was approved by the judges, suggests that Henry was not altogether deceived by his favourite's speciousness. The court believed the King was entirely guided by Wolsey and blind to his intrigues. The Lord Chamberlain prays that—

' . . . . Heaven will one day open  
The king's eyes, that so long have slept upon  
This bold bad man.'

II. 2. 42-44.

It is a matter of history that Wolsey's position was more equivocal. He needed infinite tact and acuteness to maintain the royal favour, which was always of an unstable kind.

In the extremity of his displeasure against his erstwhile favourite, Henry in the play becomes sarcastic. There is something of hurt pride and deeply wounded affection beneath the irony of the King's rebuke:

*King:*

' . . . . My father loved you :  
He said he did, and with his deed did crown  
His word upon you. Since I had my office,  
I have kept you next my heart ; have not alone  
Employ'd you where high profits might come home,  
But pared my present havings, to bestow  
My bounties upon you.

. . . . .

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. . . . . I presume  
That, as my hand has open'd bounty to you,  
My heart dropp'd love, my power rain'd honour, more  
On you than any; so your hand and heart,  
Your brain and every function of your power,  
Should, notwithstanding that your bond of duty,  
As 'twere in love's particular, be more  
To me, your friend, than any.'

III. 2. 154-60; 183-90.

After the eclipse of Wolsey, Henry transfers his affections and confidence to Cranmer. Accustomed to the scheming of the subtle fallen favourite, he is surprised and touched by the Archbishop's honesty of character. The dramatists have given proof of Henry's shrewd judgment of men in his championship of this loyal subject, of whose trustworthiness he is quickly convinced.

The cares of state cast aside, Henry is as merry a reveller as any in his court. His well-known love of masquerade is instanced in his unexpected arrival at Wolsey's supper party masked and disguised as a shepherd. He leads the dancing, the drinking of healths and the homage 'to these fair ladies' present, and has no scruple in disregarding Wolsey's veiled disapproval of his attentions to Anne Boleyn. His notorious gallantry to the pretty women he favoured is displayed in his first conversation with Anne as he leads her out to dance.

*King:*

'The fairest hand I ever touch'd! O beauty,  
Till now I never knew thee!

. . . . .



## SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY VIII

. . . . . Sweetheart,  
I were unmannerly, to take you out,  
And not to kiss you.  
. . . . .  
. . . . . sweet partner,  
I must not yet forsake you : let's be merry.'  
I. 4. 75-76; 94-6; 102-3.

Henry's interest is immediately caught by Anne's beauty and vivacity. 'By heaven, she is a dainty one,' he exclaims, when the Lord Chamberlain makes the name and estate of his chosen partner known to him.

## CHAPTER VIII

### CARDINAL WOLSEY

THE last Cardinal and almost the last Churchman to rule over England, Thomas Wolsey, was born at Ipswich about 1471 to 1475 (the exact date is disputed). The report that he was the son of a butcher is by no means authenticated, although it was in universal circulation during his lifetime. The authors of *Henry VIII* confirm this rumour. His father, Robert Wolsey, was a burgess of good standing in the town; and it is certain that he and his wife, Joan, were respectable people, though of humble birth, who were in possession of sufficient means to provide a good education for their son.

Wolsey graduated—at the age of fifteen, it is said—at Magdalen College, Oxford, gaining the appellation of the 'boy bachelor.' He became a fellow of his college and was ordained. In 1500 he obtained his first ecclesiastical preferment, being presented with the Rectory of Limington in Somerset by the Marquis of Dorset, whose three sons he had educated. He was now about twenty-five years of age, and possessed a most winning address, which obtained him friendship and confidence everywhere.

In 1503 he was brought to the notice of King Henry VII, who recognised his ability. He made him his chaplain, employed him in diplomatic work,

and presented him with the Deanship of Lincoln in 1509. On the accession of Henry VIII, he was made Almoner to that sovereign through the influence of Fox, Bishop of Winchester, who wished to strengthen his own interest against his rival, Surrey, the Lord Treasurer.

Wolsey now rose rapidly in favour and fortune, becoming in turn Rector of Torrington in Devon, Canon of Windsor and Registrar of the Order of the Garter, Prebendary of York, Dean of York and Bishop of Tournai, Bishop of Lincoln, and Bishop of Bath and Wells. Finally he received the Archbishopric of York. He held at one time the Sees of York, Durham, and Winchester; and the Pope, in acknowledgment of his diplomatic qualities, made him Cardinal of St. Cicily. He was also constituted by the Pope *Legate a latere*, and by his own authority established the 'Legatine Court', in which he acted with uncontrolled despotism. Wolsey succeeded Archbishop Warham as Lord Chancellor, and besides his enormous revenues from ecclesiastical sources in England, received stipends from the Kings of France and Spain, and from the Doge of Venice. 'He is in great repute,' reported the unfriendly Venetian ambassador, Giustiniani, who so admired the King, 'seven times more so than if he were pope.'

In his income, as in his master's, there was no distinction between public and private money. Vast sums were used in founding his college at Ipswich and Cardinal College at Oxford, now known as Christ Church, which formed but part of a splendid scheme of national education. The Cardinal

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held a power in State and Church which no subject had ever approached. It has been said, 'for sixteen years the history of England is the history of Wolsey's achievements.' But he was not satisfied, and his ambitious object was to become Pope. *Holinshed writes of him*: 'This Cardinal was of a great stomach: for he computed himself equal with princes, and by craftie suggestions got into his hands innumerable treasure.' Cavendish in one part of his biography says: 'He was the hautiest man in all his proceedings alive, having more respect to the honour of his person than he had to his spiritual profession, wherein should be showed all meekness, humility, and charity.'

Wolsey, born in a lowly rank, had by his own mental powers raised himself to his high position. *Holinshed remarks*:

'This cardinall (as Edmund Campion in his historie of Ireland describeth him) was a man undoubtedly borne to honour: I think (saith he) some princes bastard, no butchers sonne; exceeding wise; fair spoken; high minded; full of revenge; vitious of his bodie; loftie to his enemies, were they never so big; to those that accepted and sought his freendship wonderfull courteous; a ripe scholeman; thrall to affections; brought a bed with flatterie; insatiable to get, and more princelie in bestowing, as appeareth by his two colleges at Ipswich and Oxenford.'

This tribute is paraphrased in *Henry VIII* and put into the mouth of Griffith:

'This cardinal,  
Though from an humble stock, undoubtedly  
Was fashion'd to much honour from his cradle.

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He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one ;  
Exceeding wise, fair-spoken and persuading :  
Lofty and sour to them that loved him not,  
But to those men that sought him, sweet as summer.  
And though he were unsatisfied in getting,  
Which was a sin, yet in bestowing, madam,  
He was most princely : ever witness for him  
Those twins of learning that he raised in you,  
Ipswich and Oxford !'

### IV. 2. 48-59.

A number of causes, which are not given emphasis in the play, contributed to the ruin of Wolsey's schemes. His strong anti-Lutheran principles at a time when the Protestant party was rapidly gaining strength, his relations with the Papal See, and his failure to obtain the King's divorce from Rome, combined to seal his doom. In Shakespeare, the Cardinal's own soaring ambitions are the chief cause of his downfall. Realised aspirations have urged him to greater hopes, and he is indifferent by what means he reaches them. As the play reveals, he loses his sense of caution and diplomacy; and all his powers of persuasion are insufficient to stem the whirlwind which sweeps him away. Cavendish says of his disgraced retirement to Esher that 'he sank into a state of the most abject dejection until even his enemies could not help pitying him.'

It is not easy to form a true estimate of a prelate whose memory the writers of the rival ecclesiastical factions both revile. Contemporary historians appear to have retained a strong prejudice against the great Cardinal. They were very intent on abusing his

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memory in their chronicles, and a good deal of calumny and reproach was associated with his name. Even Cavendish, a loyal member of his own household, is at times in a critical mood confusing to his readers.

Bishop Creighton, his ablest biographer, points out how much England and the King owed to the Cardinal-Chancellor:

‘When Wolsey came to power England was an upstart trying to claim for herself a decent position in the august society of European States. It was Wolsey’s cleverness that set her in a place far above that which she had any right to expect. For this purpose Wolsey schemed and intrigued; when one plan failed he was always ready with another. It mattered little what was the immediate object which he had in hand; it mattered much that in pursuing it he should so act as to increase the credit of England, and create a belief in England’s power. Diplomacy can reckon few abler practitioners than was Wolsey.’

Wolsey was rapacious, but he was also a careful spender, and his administration of public moneys was most conscientious. His rigid enforcement of criminal justice during his Chancellorship caused Cavendish to remark, ‘I never saw this realm in better obedience and quiet than it was in the time of his authority and rule.’ Insolent and overbearing to his inferiors, he was at the same time kind and generous towards faithful followers, who in turn rewarded him with their attachment in his hour of need. His part in the death of the Duke of Buckingham was his most conspicuous crime.

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In the play of *Henry VIII*, while the Cardinal's pride, arrogance, selfishness, and avarice are emphasised until his fall, after that he is made a pathetic figure, claiming the sympathy of the audience. He undergoes a moral transformation, which is somewhat difficult to credit. This contrast is due, in all probability, to the presentation of this character by the pens of two authors, Shakespeare and Fletcher, with their entirely different styles.

A superb figure, Wolsey has been a favourite for the past two hundred years with eminent actors. An 18th century edition of the play states for the guidance of players assuming this part: 'The cardinal should be important in appearance, supercilious in countenance, possessed of full, florid declamation, master of oratorical variations, and sententiously emphatic.' He was approaching fifty years of age at the time the play opens, and fifty-five when he died. His corpulence of body is sneeringly referred to by the Duke of Buckingham:

'I wonder  
That such a keech can with his very bulk  
Take up the rays o' the beneficial sun  
And keep it from the earth.'

I. I. 54-57.

(A *keech* was a roll of hardened fat, and is an allusion to the fact that Wolsey was reputed by his foes to be the son of a butcher.)

The state with which Wolsey loved to surround himself is introduced with his first entry. The Cardinal passes through the antechamber in the

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palace with an imposing train, detailed in the Stage Directions. Skelton satirically describes him as going—

‘ With worldly pomps incredible,  
Before him rydeth two prestes stronge,  
And they bear two crosses right longe,  
Gapynge in every man’s face.  
After them folowe two layemen secular,  
And echo of them holdyng a pillar  
In their hands, steade of a mace.’

Cavendish describes the Cardinal passing through the City of London with a procession of lords and ladies to the number of twelve hundred horse on the 3rd of July, 1526 :

‘ Then marched he forward out of his own house at Westminster, passing through all London, over London Bridge, having before him of gentlemen a great number, thre in a rank, in black velvet livery coats, and the most part of them with great chains of gold about their necks. And all his yeomen, with noblemen’s and gentlemen’s servants following him in French tawny livery coats ; having embroïdered upon the backs and breasts of the said coats these letters, T. and C., under the cardinal’s hat. His sumpter mules, which were twenty in number and more, with his carts and other carriages of his train, were passed on before, conducted and guarded with a great number of bows and spears. He rode like a cardinal, very sumptuously, on a mule trapped with crimson velvet upon velvet, and his stirrups of copper and gilt ; and his spare mule following him with like apparel. And before him he had his two great crosses of silver, two great pillars of silver, the great seal of England, his cardinal’s hat, and a gentleman that



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carried his valaunce, otherwise called a cloak bag; which was made altogether of fine scarlet cloth, embroidered over and over with cloth of gold very richly, having in it a cloak of fine scarlet. Thus passed he through London, and all the way of his journey, having his harbingers passing before to provide lodgings for his train.'—(Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*.)

Wolsey was a man who delighted in ostentatious display. Polydore Virgil says 'that the Clergy of England never ware silk or velvet until the time of the pompous Cardinal Wolsey, who opened that dore to pride among them which hitherto cannot be shutt.' At York Place, the palace of the Archbishopric of York, which stood on the site of what was afterwards Whitehall Palace, his residence was characterised by a magnificence equal to that of a royal court. He also built for himself at Hampton Court a noble palace by the Thames. His manner of living was sumptuous, and his household consisted of more than five hundred persons, among them many people of rank,—the Earl of Derby, Lord Henry Percy, and other noble men. 'He had a steward,' says Cavendish, 'which was always a dean or a priest; a treasurer, a knight; a comptroller, an esquire; . . . in his privy kitchen he had a master-cook, who went daily in damask, satin, or velvet, with a chain of gold about his neck.' The lavish style in which he was accustomed to entertain the court is apparent in the scene of the banquet at York Place.

The hatred with which Wolsey was regarded by the jealous nobles is made plain from the beginning

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in the conversation between Norfolk, Buckingham, and Abergavenny. His enemies among the powerful aristocracy accused him of pride and effrontery, and were continually recalling his lowly birth. The Duke of Buckingham is vitriolic in his frank enmity. 'This butcher's cur', 'this Ipswich fellow,' he sneers.

*Abergavenny:*

'I cannot tell  
What heaven hath given him; let some graver eye  
Pierce into that; but I can see his pride  
Peep through each part of him: whence has he that,  
If not from hell?' I. i. 66-70.

The astute Cardinal was statesman and diplomatist enough to realise the prestige which England and her King would gain in being able to compete with the resources of France in gorgeousness and novelty at the Field of the Cloth of Gold. Henry in his vanity accepted this as a tribute to his greatness, but Wolsey drew down upon his arrogant head the disapproval of the landowners on whom fell the brunt of the cost.

*Buckingham:*

'Why the devil,  
Upon this French going out, took he upon him,  
Without the privy o' the king, to appoint  
Who should attend on him? He makes up the file  
Of all the gentry; for the most part such  
To whom as great a charge as little honour  
He meant to lay upon: and his own letter,  
The honourable board of council out,  
Must fetch him in the papers.

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*Abergavenny:*

I do know  
Kinsmen of mine, three at the least, that have  
By this so sicken'd their estates, that never  
They shall abound as formerly.

*Buckingham:*

O, many  
Have broke their backs, with laying manors on 'em  
For this great journey.

I. 1. 72-85.

The Duke of Norfolk is probably the most disinterested and unbiased observer of the Cardinal's career. He gives Wolsey just credit for his undoubted abilities and the force of character by which he attained to his high position, unaided by rank and influence. Norfolk's protests to the Duke of Buckingham is Wolsey's justification:

*Norfolk:*

'Surely, sir,  
There's in him stuff that puts him to these ends;  
For, being not propp'd by ancestry, whose grace  
Chalks successors their way, nor call'd upon  
For high feats done to the crown; neither allied  
To eminent assistants; but, spider-like,  
Out of his self-drawing web, he gives us note,  
The force of his own merit makes his way;  
A gift that heaven gives for him, which buys  
A place next to the king.'

I. 1. 57-66.

At the same time, Norfolk is fully cognisant of the sinister side of Wolsey's nature. He recognises the prelate's capabilities for revengeful malice and far-

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reaching powers, and warns the too-out-spoken Buckingham.

*Norfolk :*

  ‘ I advise you  
  . . . . . that you read  
The cardinal’s malice and his potency  
Together ; to consider further that  
What his high hatred would effect wants not  
A minister in his power. You know his nature,  
That he’s revengeful, and I know his sword  
Hath a sharp edge : it’s long and ’t may be said  
It reaches far, and where ’twill not extend,  
Thither he darts it. Bosom up my counsel ;  
You’ll find it wholesome. Lo, where comes that rock  
That I advise your shunning.’

I. i. 102-14.

The Cardinal was not popular with the commonalty, who mistrusted him, and suspected him of being actuated by spite. An onlooker at the trial of Buckingham expresses the general opinion, ‘The cardinal is the end of this’ ; and the gossip of the streets and the markets continues :

*First Gentleman :*

  ‘ ’Tis likely,  
By all conjectures : first, Kildare’s attainer,  
Then deputy of Ireland ; who removed,  
Earl Surrey was sent thither, and in haste too,  
Lest he should help his father.

*Second Gent. :*

  That trick of state  
Was a deep envious one.

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*First Gent.:*

At his return  
No doubt he will requite it. This is noted,  
And generally, whoever the king favours,  
The cardinal instantly will find employment,  
And far enough from court too.

*Second Gent.:*

All the commons  
Hate him perniciously, and, o' my conscience,  
Wish him ten fathom deep: ' II. 1. 40-51.

The rumoured separation of the King and Queen Katharine is attributed to the vindictiveness of Wolsey, bent on avenging himself against the Emperor Charles, Katharine's nephew:

'For not bestowing on him at his asking  
The archbishopric of Toledo. . . .  
. . . . The cardinal  
Will have his will, and she must fall.'

II. 1. 163-4; 166-7.

From the King, however, Wolsey receives every confidence and favour. Henry's first lines are in warm thanks to his favourite for his revelation of the supposed plot instigated by Buckingham.

*King:*

'My life itself, and the best heart of it,  
Thanks you for this great care: I stood i' the level  
Of a full-charged confederacy, and give thanks  
To you that choked it.' I. 2. 1-4.

And later on it is—

' . . . . . O my Wolsey,  
The quiet of my wounded conscience,  
Thou art a cure fit for a king.' II. 2. 74-6.

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Wolsey is presented as an adroit deflector—one who is prompt to turn defeat into self-aggrandisement. On the matter of the unpopular new taxes levied by him in his capacity as Lord Chancellor, of which the King expresses his disapprobation, he justifies himself to Henry with smooth plausibility and much complaisance:

*Wolsey:*

‘I have no further gone in this than by  
A single voice, and that not pass’d me but  
By learned approbation of the judges. If I am  
Traduced by ignorant tongues, which neither know  
My faculties nor person, yet will be  
The chronicles of my doing, let me say  
’Tis but the fate of place, and the rough brake  
That virtue must go through. We must not stint  
Our necessary actions, in the fear  
To cope malicious censurers; which ever,  
As ravenous fishes, do a vessel follow  
That is new-trimm’d, but benefit no further  
Than vainly longing. What we oft do best,  
By sick interpreters, once weak ones, is  
Not ours or not allow’d; what worst, as oft,  
Hitting a grosser quality, is cried up  
For our best act. If we shall stand still,  
In fear our motion will be mock’d or carp’d at,  
We should take root here where we sit, or sit  
State-statues only.’

I. 2. 69-88.

The King’s decision to revoke the taxation is Wolsey’s opportunity to retrieve popularity. To his secretary he makes an aside:

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*Wolsey:*

‘A word with you.

Let there be letters writ to every shire,  
Of the king’s grace and pardon. The griev’d commons  
Hardly conceive of me : let it be noised  
That through our intercession this revokement  
And pardon comes.’ I. 2. 102-7.

Even the Duke of Norfolk is alienated by the activities of the all-powerful favourite in the matter of the King’s separation from Queen Katharine:

*Norfolk:*

‘This is the cardinal’s doing, the king-cardinal :  
That blind priest, like the eldest son of fortune,  
Turns what he list. The king will know him one day.

How holily he works in all his business !  
And with what zeal ! for, now he has crack’d the  
league

Between us and the emperor, the queen’s great  
nephew,

He dives into the king’s soul, and there scatters  
Dangers, doubts, wringing of the conscience,  
Fears and despairs ; and all these for his marriage :  
And out of all these to restore the king,  
He counsels a divorce ;

We had need pray,  
And heartily, for our deliverance ;  
Or this imperious man will work us all  
From princes into pages : all men’s honours  
Lie like one lump before him, to be fashion’d  
Into what pitch he please.’

II. 2. 20-22 ; 24-31 ; 45-50.

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If the bitter words spoken by Queen Katharine at the trial were true of this man's character, Wolsey fully deserved his own humiliation and downfall, which were so soon to follow those of the unhappy Queen he had been the means of displacing.

*Queen Katharine:*

' . . . . You're meek and humble-mouth'd ;  
You sign your place and calling, in full seeming,  
With meekness and humility ; but your heart  
Is cramm'd with arrogancy, spleen, and pride.  
You have, by fortune and his highness' favours,  
Gone slightly o'er low steps, and now are mounted  
Where powers are your retainers, and your words,  
Domestics to you, serve your will as't please.  
Yourself pronounce their office. I must tell you,  
You tender more your person's honour than  
Your high profession spiritual : . . . . '

II. 4. 107-17.

Although the King himself clears Wolsey of the charge that he is the instigator of the divorce proceedings, the assurance is by no means convincing in the light of the Cardinal's activities.

*King:*

' . . . will you be more justified? you ever  
Have wish'd the sleeping of this business, never  
desired  
It to be stir'd, but oft have hindered, oft,  
The passages made toward it: on my honour,  
I speak my good lord cardinal to this point,  
And thus far clear him.'

II. 4. 162-67.

Wolsey's semblance of friendship for the Queen in



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Act II is admirably suggested, as it adds a deep tint of hypocrisy to the prelate's character. His persistent harassing of Katharine in his arguments to induce her to take the advice of himself and Cardinal Campeius to withdraw her suit to the Pope, do him no credit. His words and professions are hypocritical. His indifference to her pitiful protests, and sanctimonious remonstrances at her accusations, reveal a soul of callous selfishness. Shakespeare's narrative of the duel between Katharine and the Cardinal is unsupported by history. That the Queen strongly suspected his part in the furtherance of her divorce, and was convinced that it was enacted through personal malice, is revealed in Hall's report of her acerbity at the interview with the Cardinals at Bridewell, which the Playwright has outlined in Act III, Scene 1.

'Of this trouble I only may thank you, my Lord Cardinal of York, for because I have wondered at your high pride and vain glory, and abhor your voluptuous life, and little regard your presumptuous power and tyranny; therefore of malice you have kindled this fire, and set this matter abroad; and in especial for the great malice you bear to my nephew, the emperor . . .'

Wolsey was indebted to the Emperor Charles for the failure of his schemes to win the Papal crown, and his bitter nature caused him to take his vengeance on Katharine, and at the same time embrace the opportunity of increasing his favour with the King of France.

To the moment of his downfall Wolsey was too

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concerned with his design for the marriage of Henry to the Duchess of Alençon, and his own preferment thereby, to realise how sinister was the gathering storm. At the hour of his greatest need his habitual acumen was obscured by his greed. The play suggests that Wolsey was unaware of, or gave little heed to, the growing ascendancy of the star of Anne Boleyn and her Lutheran friends. Confident of his own power, he miscalculated the strength of his enemies. Certainly he shows displeasure at Henry's marked attentions to Anne at his banquet, and makes an effort to divert the King, but this is only a passing incident. He was fully cognisant of his sovereign's susceptibilities where pretty women were concerned, and possibly regarded Henry's infatuation as a fancy which could be easily distracted.

The Cardinal made his first great mistake in writing to the Pope that indiscreet letter in which, as the Duke of Suffolk recounts, he :

' . . . did entreat his holiness  
To stay the judgement o' the divorce ; for if  
It did take place, ' I do,' quoth he, ' perceive  
My king is tangled in affection to  
A creature of the queen's, Lady Anne Bullen.'

III. 2. 32-6.

This letter having, by mischance, fallen into the King's hands, Henry could no longer doubt his favourite's deceit or the falsity of his scheme.

According to the playwrights, it was Wolsey's own mistake that, following this unfortunate

incident, inventories of his personal wealth also met the King's eye and were arousing questions in Henry's mind as to the manner in which it had been accumulated. At the present state of the monarch's displeasure towards the favourite, a worse misfortune could not have occurred. Although, as pointed out in a previous chapter, this particular circumstance was actually connected with another Bishop, and not with Wolsey at all, after his fall the great Cardinal-Archbishop caused an inventory to be taken of all his vast possessions, the particulars of which may be read in Stow's Chronicle.

Were it not for proofs of his perfidy, Wolsey's protest of his honesty would appear to be sincere:

*Wolsey:*

' My sovereign, I confess your royal graces,  
 Shower'd on me daily, have been more than could  
 My studied purposes requite ; which went  
 Beyond all man's endeavours : my endeavours  
 Have ever come too short of my desires,  
 Yet filed with my abilities : mine own ends  
 Have been mine so that evermore they pointed  
 To the good of your most sacred person and  
 The profit of the state. For your great graces  
 Heap'd upon me, poor undeserver, I  
 Can nothing render but allegiant thanks,  
 My prayers to heaven for you, my loyalty,  
 Which ever has and ever shall be growing,  
 Till death, that winter, kill it.

. . . . .

I do profess  
 That for your highness' good I ever labour'd  
 More than mine own ; that am, have, and will be—

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Though all the world should crack their duty to you,  
And throw it from their soul; though perils did  
Abound, as thick as thought could make 'em, and  
Appear in forms more horrid—yet my duty,  
As doth a rock against the chiding flood,  
Should the approach of this wild river break,  
And stand unshaken yours.'

III. 2. 166-79; 190-99.

Failing to turn aside his master's anger, and confronted with the betraying papers, the extent of Wolsey's duplicity is revealed in his appalled reflections:

'This paper has undone me: 'tis the account  
Of all that world of wealth I have drawn together  
For mine own ends; indeed, to gain the popedom,  
And fee my friends in Rome. O negligence!  
Fit for a fool to fall by: what cross devil  
Made me put this main secret in the packet  
I sent the king? Is there no way to cure this?  
No new device to beat this from his brains?  
I know 'twill stir him strongly; yet I know  
A way, if it take right, in spite of fortune  
Will bring me off again. What's this?' 'To the Pope!  
The letter, as I live, with all the business  
I writ to 's holiness. Nay then, farewell!  
I have touch'd the highest point of all my greatness;  
And, from that full meridian of my glory,  
I haste now to my setting: I shall fall  
Like a bright exhalation in the evening,  
And no man see me more.'

III. 2. 210-27.

Wolsey's refusal to deliver up the Great Seal to

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his sworn enemies, the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, the Earl of Surrey, and the Lord Chamberlain, is a piece of stubborn obstinacy and a final act of defiance against those who make every display of their triumph at his ruin. The members of the opposition faction are now open and undisguised in their accusations, in which there is a strong modicum of truth. The fallen Lord Chancellor is charged:

*Surrey:*

'First that, without the king's assent or knowledge,  
You wrought to be a legate; by which power  
You maim'd the jurisdiction of all bishops.

*Norfolk:*

Then that in all you writ to Rome, or else  
To foreign princes, 'Ego et Rex meus'  
Was still inscribed; in which you brought the king  
To be your servant.

*Suffolk:*

Then that, without the knowledge  
Either of king or council, when you went  
Ambassador to the emperor, you made bold  
To carry into Flanders the great seal.

*Surrey:*

Item, you sent a large commission  
To Gregory de Cassado, to conclude,  
Without the king's will or the state's allowance,  
A league between his highness and Ferrara.

*Suffolk:*

That, out of mere ambition, you have caused  
Your holy hat to be stamp'd on the king's coin.

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*Surrey:*

Then, that you have sent innumerable substance—  
By what means got, I leave to your own conscience—  
To furnish Rome, and to prepare the way,  
You have for dignities, to the mere undoing  
Of all the kingdom. Many more there are:  
Which, since they are of you and odious,  
I will not taint my mouth with.'

III. 2. 310-32.

Like that of his victim, Buckingham. Wolsey's character is revealed at its noblest after his disgrace. His meditation on the vanities of pride and greatness is one of the finest speeches in the play, although its authorship is probably due to Fletcher. In it Wolsey acknowledges that ambition has been his evil genius, and so in his last appearance on the scene wins our sympathy.

*Wolsey:*

'Farewell! a long farewell, to all my greatness!  
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth  
The tender leaves of hopes; to-morrow blossoms,  
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him;  
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,  
And, when he thinks, good easy man, full surely  
His greatness is a-ripening, nips his root,  
And then he falls, as I do. I have ventured,  
Like little wanton boys that swim on bladders,  
This many summers in a sea of glory,  
But far beyond my depth: my high-blown pride  
At length broke under me, and now has left me,  
Weary and old with service, to the mercy  
Of a rude stream that must for ever hide me.  
Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye:

## CARDINAL WOLSEY

I feel my heart new open'd. O, how wretched  
Is that poor man that hangs on princes' favours!  
There is, betwixt that smile we would aspire to,  
That sweet aspect of princes, and their ruin,  
More pangs and fears than wars or women have:  
And when he falls, he falls like Lucifer,  
Never to hope again.'

III. 2. 351-72.

To Cromwell, his only remaining friend in his misfortunes, Wolsey gives the assurance that with the passing of ambition with its strivings for power, with all its responsibilities, he has been:

'Never so truly happy, my good Cromwell.  
I know myself now; and I feel within me  
A peace above all earthly dignities,  
A still and quiet conscience. The king has cured me,  
I humbly thank his grace; and from these shoulders,  
These ruin'd pillars, out of pity, taken  
A load would sink a navy, too much honour.  
O, 'tis a burden, Cromwell, 'tis a burden  
Too heavy for a man that hopes for heaven!

. . . . .  
Cromwell, I did not think to shed a tear  
In all my miseries; but thou has forced me,  
Out of thy honest truth, to play the woman.  
Let's dry our eyes: and thus far hear me, Cromwell;  
And, when I am forgotten, as I shall be,  
And sleep in dull cold marble, where no mention  
Of me more must be heard of, say, I taught thee;  
Say, Wolsey, that once trod the ways of glory,  
And sounded all the depths and shoals of honour,  
Found thee a way, out of his wreck, to rise in;  
A sure and safe one, though thy master miss'd it.

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Mark but my fall and that that ruin'd me.  
Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition :  
By that sin fell the angels; how can man then,  
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it?  
Love thyself last : cherish those hearts that hate thee ;  
Corruption wins not more than honesty.  
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,  
To silence envious tongues. Be just, and fear not :  
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,  
Thy God's, and truth's; then if thou fall'st, O  
Cromwell,  
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr! Serve the king ;'

III. 2. 377-85; 428-49.

The discarded favourite is generous enough to bear no malice against Henry for his downfall: 'That sun, I pray, may never set!'

It is from the lips of Griffith, Queen Katharine's gentleman-usher, that we hear the tale of the Cardinal's last hours, and the manner of his death:

*Griffith:*

' . . . the voice goes, madam :  
For after the stout Earl Northumberland  
Arrested him at York, and brought him forward,  
As a man sorely tainted, to his answer,  
He fell sick suddenly, and grew so ill  
He could not sit his mule.

. . . . .  
At last, with easy roads, he came to Leicester,  
Lodged in the abbey; where the reverend abbot,  
With all his convent, honourably received him;  
To whom he gave these words, 'O father abbot,  
An old man, broken with the storms of state,  
Is come to lay his weary bones among ye;



## CARDINAL WOLSEY

Give him a little earth for charity!'  
So went to bed; where eagerly his sickness  
Pursued him still: and three nights after this,  
About the hour of eight, which he himself  
Foretold should be his last, full of repentance,  
Continual meditations, tears and sorrows,  
He gave his honours to the world again,  
His blessed part to heaven, and slept in peace.'

IV. 2. 11-16; 17-30.

Cavendish, who was with his master at the time, wrote:

'... we came to the Abbey of Leicester, where at his coming in at the gates, the Abbot of the place, with all his convent, met him with the light of many torches, whom they right reverently received with great reverence. To whom my lord said, "Father Abbot, I am come hither to leave my bones among you."'

The final portrait of Wolsey, both from his own words, and the epitaph pronounced by Griffith, is of a man who, once proud, arrogant, unscrupulous, false to his own vows of priesthood, over-ambitious, has become through misfortune, humble, gentle, and repentant.

The Queen he injured speaks of the dead man as 'the great child of honour,' but sums up his character with the bitterness his treatment of her deserves:

*Queen Katharine:*

'He was a man  
Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking  
Himself with princes; one that by suggestion  
Tied all the kingdom: simony was fair-play:

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His own opinion was his law : i' the presence  
He would say untruths, and be ever double  
Both in his words and meaning : he was never,  
But where he meant to ruin, pitiful :  
His promises were, as he then was, mighty ;  
But his performance, as he is now, nothing :  
Of his own body he was ill, and gave  
The clergy ill example.'

IV. 2. 33-44.

There are several passages with a similar allusion to the Cardinal's licentious life as that contained in the last two lines.

After his death at Leicester, the great Cardinal was buried in the precincts of the Abbey of Black Canons, which had offered him a kindly hospitality at the last. The Abbey is now a ruin, only insignificant portions remaining. His tomb is unknown, and no monument covers the bones of the man who, many assert, was the greatest statesman that England has ever produced.

## CHAPTER IX

## WOLSEY'S FRIENDS

*Bishop Stephen Gardiner*

FOREMOST among Wolsey's friends in the play is Dr. Stephen Gardiner, later Bishop of Winchester and Lord Chancellor of England. He was born about 1493; and rumour had it that he was the illegitimate son of Dr. Woodville, Bishop of Salisbury, brother of Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV, and, therefore, great uncle to Henry VIII. There is, however, no authority for this, and his father is now known to have been John Gardiner, a cloth merchant with a considerable business in Bury St. Edmunds.

Gardiner studied at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, of which he became master. Through an intimacy with the Duke of Norfolk he was introduced to Wolsey, who made him his secretary, instructed him in foreign politics, and brought him under the notice of the King. Gardiner devoted himself to the study of canon and civil law, in which subjects he attained so great a proficiency that no one could dispute his pre-eminence. Because of this special knowledge he was sent to Rome in 1528 to further the royal divorce with Pope Clement VII. It was

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owing to Gardiner's vigorous advocacy that the celebrated commission was issued to Cardinals Wolsey and Campeggio to try the cause in England.

Proceedings being delayed, Gardiner was again sent to Rome. This time, however, his efforts were unavailing. Owing to his dread of the Emperor, the Pope would make no further concessions. In spite of this failure, the King showed his appreciation of Gardiner's services by appointing him his secretary and Archdeacon of Norfolk.

In 1530 he was despatched to Cambridge to procure the decision of the university as to the unlawfulness or otherwise of Henry's marriage, and was rewarded for his success there with the Bishopric of Winchester, rendered vacant by Wolsey's death.

James Gairdner, his biographer, remarks:

'The promotion was unexpected, and was accompanied by expressions from the king which made it still more honourable, as showing that if he had been in some things too subservient, it was from no abject, self-seeking policy of his own. Gardiner had, in fact, ere this remonstrated boldly with his sovereign on some points, and Henry now reminded him of the fact. "I have often *squared* with you, Gardiner," he said familiarly, "but I love you never the worse, as the bishopric I give will convince you."'

Although associated with Cranmer in the matter of the King's divorce, Gardiner was an opponent of the Archbishop from a doctrinal point of view. The Bishop of Winchester was much concerned in drawing up and passing through the House of Lords the severe statute of the Six Articles in 1539, which led to the persecution of the Protestants; and later

on, with the support of the Council, he attempted to condemn Cranmer on a charge of heresy in connection with this Act.

During the minority of Edward VI Cranmer retaliated for these accusations and Gardiner's resistance to the Reformers' policy by committing him to the Tower throughout the short reign. With the accession of Queen Mary he was released, restored to his Bishopric, and appointed Lord Chancellor. He was now in a position to charge his old enemy, Cranmer, with heresy, and encompass his death at the stake. Gardiner died in 1555, over sixty years of age, while still in office.

James Gairdner writes in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:

'Perhaps no celebrated character of that age has been the subject of so much ill-merited abuse at the hands of popular historians. That his virtue was not equal to every trial must be admitted, but that he was anything like the morose and narrow-minded bigot he is commonly represented there is nothing whatever to show. He has been called ambitious, turbulent, crafty, abject, vindictive, blood-thirsty, and a good many other things besides, not quite in keeping with each other; in addition to which it is roundly asserted by Bishop Burnet that he was despised alike by Henry and by Mary, both of whom made use of him as a tool. How such a mean and abject character submitted to remain five years in prison rather than change his principles is not very clearly explained; and as to his being despised, we have seen already that neither Henry nor Mary considered him by any means despicable. The truth is, there is not a single divine or statesman of that day whose course throughout was so thoroughly consistent. He

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was no friend to the Reformation, it is true, but he was at least a conscientious opponent. In doctrine he adhered to the old faith from first to last, while as a question of church policy, the only matter for consideration with him was whether the new laws and ordinances were constitutionally justifiable.'

To Shakespeare and his fellow playwrights Gardiner represented the unpopular Catholic party, and probably for that reason he was made a sinister character in the drama, as Cranmer, the Reformer Archbishop, was shown to be a more worthy man than history suggests.

Wolsey calls Gardiner 'that good fellow,' meaning that he has no troublesome scruples. He is presented as the Cardinal's man, owing his position to Wolsey's favour. 'I find him a fit fellow,' Henry says. He plays the part, in fact, of a spy for the Cardinal, who ruthlessly displaced Doctor Pace to make room for him.

*Wolsey: (Aside to Gardiner)*

'Give me your hand: much joy and favour to you:  
You are the king's now.

*Gardiner: (Aside to Wolsey)*

But to be commanded  
For ever by your grace, whose hand has rais'd me.'

II. 2. 117-20.

Gardiner was an active and unscrupulous enemy 'to all reformation,' the advocate and staunch supporter of the Old Faith, in opposition to the apostle in England of the Lutheran doctrines, Cranmer. His zeal against Anne Boleyn's party provoked the

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King after Wolsey's death. The Bishop says to his friend and confidant, Sir Thomas Lovell:

' . . . for the stock, . . . I wish it grubb'd up now,  
. . . . .  
. . . let me tell you, it will ne'er be well,  
'Twill not, Sir Thomas Lovell, take 't of me,  
Till Cranmer, Cromwell, her two hands, and she,  
Sleep in their graves.'

V. 1. 22-23; 29-32.

It is rumoured that:

'He of Winchester  
Is held no great good lover of the archbishop's,  
The virtuous Cranmer.'

IV. 1. 103-5.

The malevolence of one prelate towards another, supposing himself out of favour, and striving for his place, is depicted in the character of Gardiner. After a rebuff in his efforts to bring about the ruin of Cranmer, he endeavours with mistaken judgment to influence Henry by extravagant flattery, only to receive the rebuke:

*King:*

'You were ever good at sudden commendations,  
Bishop of Winchester. But know, I come not  
To hear such flattery now, and in my presence  
They are too thin and bare to hide offences.  
To me you cannot reach you play the spaniel,  
And think with wagging of your tongue to win me;  
But, whatsoe'er thou tak'st me for, I'm sure  
Thou has a cruel nature and a bloody.'

V. 3. 122-29.

The foregoing is an example of the strong bias

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displayed against this man of honest principles, though mistaken zeal, by the dramatists, whose point of view was Elizabethan.

### *Cardinal Campeius*

The Cardinal Campeius of the play is the Cardinal Campeggio of history, whose object was to delay as far as possible the proceedings of the divorce between Henry and Katharine. He was a man of great learning, and first came to England in 1518 to prevail on the King to enter upon a war against the Turks, from which Henry was dissuaded by Wolsey. Campeggio was, however, well received, and later made Bishop of Salisbury (1524).

This 'most learned reverend sir' returned to this country as Papal Legate in October, 1528. He is shown to be completely beguiled by Wolsey, of whose integrity and wisdom he appears to have no doubts. Entirely deceived as to Wolsey's true nature, he is untouched by Queen Katharine's moving appeal at her trial. Later, when the two Cardinals visit the Queen in her apartments, he assures her with all sincerity:

'Most honour'd madam,  
My Lord of York, out of his noble nature,  
Zcal and obedience he still bore your grace,  
Forgetting, like a good man, your late censure  
Both of his truth and him, which was too far,  
Offers, as I do, in a sign of peace,  
His service and his counsel.'

III. i. 61-67.



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In his delays and unwillingness to proceed to the extremities desired by the King, Campeius greatly displeased Henry, who deprived him of his See of Salisbury. The Duke of Suffolk relates how:

‘ Cardinal Campeius  
Is stol’n away to Rome; hath ta’en no leave;  
Has left the cause o’ the king unhandled, and  
Is posted as the agent of our cardinal,  
To second all his plot.’

III. 2. 56-60.

Ultimately Henry did without the pronouncement of either Papal Legate or Pope.

### *Thomas Cromwell*

An important personage, whose star was in the ascendant, has but a small and inconspicuous part to play in *Henry VIII.* In the *Dramatis Personæ*, Thomas Cromwell, afterwards Earl of Essex, and the holder of many high offices of state, is described as ‘Servant to Wolsey’; and the authors have made him the general representative of the Cardinal’s faithful followers.

Cromwell was the son of Walter Cromwell, a brewer, smith, and fuller of Putney, and born about the year 1485. His life was one of many vicissitudes. He served as a soldier of France in Italy, was clerk to an English factory at Antwerp, solicitor to Wolsey, and the Cardinal’s chief agent in the foundation of his colleges at Ipswich and Oxford, and

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member of Parliament. He opposed the articles of impeachment against his patron, Wolsey, with considerable eloquence, and not without success. The King was struck by his dauntless fidelity and took him under his protection. In 1531 he was made a Privy Councillor, and in 1532, Master of the Jewel House. He rendered himself more acceptable to Henry by reviving the complaints against the clergy as a pretext for the confiscation of the wealth of the bishops, and was immediately raised to the most eminent of dignities, including the honour of knighthood.

Subsequently, Cromwell became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Principal Secretary of State, Master of the Rolls, and Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, Visitor-General of the English Monasteries, and Keeper of the Privy Seal. He was created Baron Cromwell; Vicar-General, and Vicegerent in all religious matters next to the King, who was now Supreme Head of the Church; Knight of the Garter, and Dean of Wells; and later, Earl of Essex, and Lord Chamberlain of England, before he had attained the age of fifty years. His power was employed in promoting and establishing the Reformation in England. Unfortunately, his activity in projecting the marriage between the King and Anne of Cleves, to whom Henry took an instant dislike, was the means of turning the King against him, and his fall was immediate. The counts upon which he was condemned were many, and he was beheaded on Tower Hill in July, 1540.

In *Henry VIII* this remarkable man first appears

for a few moments as Wolsey's secretary, when the Cardinal enquires concerning a packet of papers he has sent to the King—that same inventory and letter to the Pope, which are the cause of his downfall. It is to the credit of Cromwell that he served Wolsey, his master, faithfully, and showed real sincerity in his reluctance to leave him at his bidding after his disgrace:

*Cromwell:*

‘O my lord,  
Must I then leave you? must I needs forgo  
So good, so noble and so true a master?  
Bear witness, all that have not hearts of iron,  
With what a sorrow Cromwell leaves his lord.  
The king shall have my service; but my prayers  
For ever and for ever shall be yours.’

III. 2. 421-27.

These sentiments draw from Wolsey that noble speech wherein he charges Cromwell to ‘fling away ambition.’ Cromwell shows that, with all his faults, the proud Cardinal possessed the personality which begets passionate loyalty.

After Wolsey's death, however, Cromwell veered to the Lutheran party, and made a bitter opponent of his dead master's disciple, Bishop Gardiner. He was known as a true friend of Cranmer, and his championship of the Archbishop of Canterbury at his examination before the council is a dramatic scene in the play.

Cromwell's popularity with the commonalty is expressed in the remarks of onlookers at Anne Boleyn's coronation. One says that Cromwell is—

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'A man in much esteem with the king, and truly  
A worthy friend. The king has made him master  
O' the jewel house,  
And one, already, of the privy council.'

IV. 1. 109-12.

'He will deserve more,' another asserts. 'Yes,  
without all doubt,' is the reply. In much the same  
words Sir Thomas Lovell tells the provoked  
Gardiner:

'As for Cromwell,  
Beside that of the jewel house, is made master  
O' the rolls, and the king's secretary; further, sir,  
Stands in the gap and trade of more preferments,  
With which the time will load him.'

V. 1. 33-37.

### *Lovell, the Lord Chamberlain, Guildford, and Sands*

Among Wolsey's friends at court, who are present  
at his banquet at York Place, are Sir Thomas Lovell,  
Sir Henry Guildford, Lord Sands, and the Lord  
Chamberlain. Neither of these join in the sub-  
sequent jubilation of his enemies. They are gentle-  
men of the old school, emphatically pronouncing  
their dislike of new fashions and new manners. Sir  
Thomas Lovell speaks warmly of the prelate's  
hospitality:

'That churchman bears a bounteous mind indeed,  
A hand as fruitful as the land that feeds us;  
His dews fall everywhere.'

I. 3. 55-57.

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To which the Lord Chamberlain and Lord Sands  
add their tributes:

*Lord Chamberlain:*

‘No doubt he’s noble;  
He had a black mouth that said other of him.

*Lord Sands:*

He may, my lord; has wherewithal: in him  
Sparing would show a worse sin than ill doctrine:  
Men of his way should be most liberal;  
They are set here for examples.

*Lord Chamberlain:*

True, they are so;  
But few now give so great ones.’

I. 3. 56-63.

Knighted at the battle of Stoke, in 1487, Sir Thomas Lovell was a trusted follower of Henry VII and appointed one of the executors of that King’s will. He was ‘Treasurer to the King’s Grace’; and Henry VIII made him Master of the Wards and Constable of the Tower. He died in 1524; but the playwrights have introduced him into Acts III and V in connection with events belonging to the years 1529 and 1533. He was noted for his fidelity to the Old Faith and antagonism to the Lutheran doctrines. He was in the confidence of Gardiner, who says:

‘. . . . you’re a gentleman  
Of mine own way; I know you wise, religious;’  
V. 1. 27-28.

In his official capacity as Constable of the Tower, Sir Thomas is one of those who accompany the Duke

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of Buckingham from his trial at Westminster Hall to the landing-stage by the river. The Duke and Lovell appear to have been at enmity, for at this solemn hour Lovell prays Buckingham—

‘ . . . . . for charity,  
If ever any malice in your heart  
Were hid against me, now forgive me frankly.’

To which the Duke replies generously:

‘ Sir Thomas Lovell, I as free forgive you  
As I would be forgiven : I forgive all ;’

II. 1. 79-83.

The Lord Chamberlain and Sir Henry Guildford are asked by Wolsey to act as comptrollers at his banquet. On the way thither the Lord Chamberlain says to Lovell:

‘ Come, good Sir Thomas,  
We shall be late else ; which I would not be,  
For I was spoke to, with Sir Henry Guildford  
This night to be comptrollers.’

I. 3. 64-67.

This Lord Chamberlain is intended for the Earl of Worcester, who held office under Henry VII and Henry VIII until his death in 1526. He was succeeded by Lord Sands, who is also present at the entertainment. It is this latter nobleman who is the Lord Chamberlain at the christening of the Princess Elizabeth.

Sir Henry Guildford is active in offering ‘a general welcome from his grace’ to the Cardinal’s guests. A distinguished soldier, he was Comptroller of the Royal Household and one of the Chamberlains of the Exchequer.

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The Sir William Sands who, with Sir Thomas Lovell and Sir Nicholas Vaux, receives Buckingham after his trial and accompanies him to the Tower, is the same person who, as Lord Sands, is present at Wolsey's masquerade. Shakespeare possibly did not know that they were one and the same. (This gentleman's name appears both as Lord Sands and Lord Sandys in the First Folio.) The confusion may have arisen through the Playwright's error in placing the King's first meeting with Anne Boleyn and Buckingham's condemnation at the same date. In actual fact the former incident happened some six years afterwards.

Sands is a whimsical old peer who calls himself 'an honest country lord,' and strongly disapproves of the *French fashions in apparel and manners* which have come to court. He is a merry reveller, however, with an eye for a pretty face, ready to 'kiss you twenty with a breath,' and an impudent, witty tongue, which is at times inclined, in his own apology, 'to talk a little wild.' His pleasantry is of the broad Tudor type. 'You are a merry gamester, My Lord Sands,' Anne Boleyn cries, laughing at his bold sallies.

## ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

### CHAPTER X

#### ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

THE statement so often made that Cranmer was the 'first Protestant Archbishop of Canterbury' requires distinct modification. Mr. W. Browning Smith says:

'It must be remembered that the modern idea of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism as two broadly marked, clearly divided, and antagonistic systems was only forming in Germany, and was all but unknown in England in Cranmer's day. It would be unnecessary to state so obvious a truth, were it not for the seemingly ineradicable tendency of hasty thinkers to throw back familiar distinctions in religion and politics to a period when such distinctions had not come into existence. . . . In what may be called the external work of the English Reformation, Cranmer's part was secondary, the principal agent being naturally Cromwell. The dissolution of the monasteries was the work of the minister, not of the archbishop; but the latter showed a laudable zeal in trying to secure as much as possible of the confiscated monastic property for the benefit of religion and learning.'

Thomas Cranmer, second son of Thomas Cranmer and Anne Hatfield, belonged to a family known in Nottinghamshire from the time of the Norman Conquest. Born in 1489, he received his early education, according to Morice, his secretary, from 'a



marvellous severe and cruel schoolmaster,' whose discipline must have been severe indeed to deserve this special mention in those times. The same authority states that he was initiated by his father in those field sports, such as hunting and hawking, which formed one of his recreations in after life.

At the age of fourteen Cranmer was placed by his mother, then a widow, at Jesus College, Cambridge, of which he became later a fellow. A chance meeting with Gardiner, Secretary of State, and Edward Fox, the Lord High Almoner, and the discussion with them of the leading question of the day, the King's divorce, led to Cranmer's presentation to Henry. The future Archbishop gave his opinion that if the canonists and the universities should decide that marriage with a deceased brother's widow was illegal, that between the King and Katharine could be declared null and void by the ordinary ecclesiastical courts. The necessity of an appeal to Rome was thus dispensed with (*Encyclopædia Britannica*). When Henry heard this view, he summoned Cranmer. "I will speak to him," he said. "Let him be sent for out of hand. This man, I trow, has got the right sow by the ear."

Cranmer was commanded to devote himself to the question of the divorce, and wrote a treatise setting forth his arguments, for which he was made a royal chaplain. He was despatched to Rome in 1530 with an embassy under the Earl of Wiltshire, Anne Boleyn's father, to argue the matter with the Pope. The Pontiff received him with marked courtesy and appointed him "Grand Penitentiary of

## ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

England, Ireland and Wales", a mark of distinction designed to quiet his active and enquiring spirit and prevent him from joining the Reformers, with whom he was in sympathy. He got no further satisfaction, however, in reply to his arguments and demands.

In 1531 Cranmer went to Germany as sole ambassador to the Emperor in the hope of furthering the divorce in that quarter. This hope was not realised, but it was during this visit that he sounded the views of the German colleges on the subject. He returned to England to find himself appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in succession to Archbishop Warham, who died in August, 1532.

It is after Wolsey's dismissal that Cromwell tells him the ominous news:

' . . . Cranmer is return'd with welcome,  
Install'd lord archbishop of Canterbury.'

III. 2. 400-1.

Ominous, because, as Wolsey well knows, Cranmer's preferment means the triumph of Anne Boleyn's party. In the latter part of the play Cranmer, in the place of Wolsey, becomes a dominant figure second only to the King. The first mention of his name comes from Henry. In an aside, after the adjournment of the Legate's court, his thoughts turn with relief from 'this dilatory sloth and tricks of Rome' to the return of Cranmer:

' My learn'd and well-beloved servant, Cranmer,  
Prithee, return; with thy approach, I know,  
My comfort comes along.'

II. 4. 238-40.

## ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

Cranmer was at the moment absent on his mission to the German universities with the object of ascertaining the views of the great canonists of the day on the proposed divorce. Later on the Duke of Norfolk asks, 'When returns Cranmer?' To which the Duke of Suffolk replies:

'He is return'd in his opinions, which  
Have satisfied the king for his divorce,  
Together with all famous colleges  
Almost in Christendom:'

III. 2. 64-7.

The nobles, who so hated the presumptuous arrogance of Wolsey, are, on the other hand, no friends of Cranmer. True to their tenets, they are as antagonistic to a change in religious observance as to upstart statesmen. Norfolk, Suffolk, and Surrey are principal members of the Council before which Cranmer is arraigned for heresy. The Lord Chancellor who presides on this occasion is Sir Thomas More, appointed to the office in the place of Wolsey. But before his heretical inclinations offended the upholders of the Old Faith, the future Archbishop was well spoken of at the court.

*Norfolk:*

'This same Cranmer's  
A worthy fellow, and hath ta'en much pain  
In the king's business.

*Suffolk:*

He has; and we shall see him  
For it an archbishop.'

III. 2. 71-4.

## ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

Wolsey having lost the King's favour, Cranmer was the rising star. He was ready to tell his sovereign what he most wished to know, without endeavouring to influence him to his own ends. He refused to accept the Archbishopric of Canterbury unless he received it direct from the King without the intervention of the Pontiff.

Presided over by the new Archbishop, Convocation sat to determine the immediate questions of fact and law in relation to Katharine's marriage with Henry as affected by her previous marriage with his brother, Arthur; and in the main, decisions favourable to the King's object were made. Finally, Cranmer gave judgment declaring the marriage null and void from the first, and pronounced sentence of divorce against the Queen. For this, and his Lutheran views regarding the supremacy of the King in the place of the Pope, he was excommunicated.

The course subsequently taken by Cranmer in promoting the Reformation exposed him to the bitter hostility of the reactionary party or 'men of the old learning', of which Gardiner and Bonner were leaders; and on two occasions in particular, in 1543 and 1545, conspiracies were formed by the Council to effect his overthrow. But he had the King's support, and both conspiracies failed (*Enc. Brit.*)

Shakespeare suggests that the Archbishop was well aware how active the more conservative church party was against him, and was more than willing to fight his enemies in the open. Sir Thomas Lovell tells Gardiner:

ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

‘The archbishop  
Is the king’s hand and tongue; and who dare speak  
One syllable against him?’

To which Gardiner replies:

‘Yes, ycs, Sir Thomas,  
There are that dare; and I myself have ventured  
To speak my mind of him: and indced this day,  
Sir, I may tell it you, I think I have  
Incenscd the lords o’ the council, that he is—  
For so I know he is, they know he is—  
A most arch-heretic, a pestilence  
That does infect the land: with which they moved  
Have brokcn with the king; who hath so far  
Given ear to our complaint, of his great grace  
And princely care forsecing those fell mischiefs  
Our reasons laid before him, hath commanded  
To-morrow morning to the council-board  
He be convented. He’s a rank weed, Sir Thomas,  
And we must root him out.’

V. I. 37-53.

When the King warns him of the charges of heresy that face him, and speaks of the advisability of bringing the matter before the Council, Cranmer shows a simplicity and candour which meet with Henry’s approval:

*Cranmer: (kneeling)*

‘I humbly thank your highness;  
And am right glad to catch this good occasion  
Most thoroughly to be winnow’d, where my chaff  
And corn shall fly asunder: for, I know,  
There’s none stands under more calumnious tongues  
Than I myself, poor man.’

V. I. 108-113.

## ARCHBISHOP CRANMER

By this time Henry had transferred his full favour and confidence to his Archbishop of Canterbury. Accustomed to the intrigues of Wolsey, he was both surprised and pleased at Cranmer's attitude of humility.

*King:*

‘Stand up, good Canterbury:

Thy truth and thy integrity is rooted  
In us, thy friend: give me thy hand, stand up:  
Prithee, let's walk. Now, by my holidame,  
What manner of man are you? My lord, I look'd  
You would have given me your petition, that  
I should have ta'en some pains to bring together  
Yourself and your accusers; and to have heard you,  
Without endurance further.

*Cranmer:*

Most dread liege,

The good I stand on is my truth and honesty:  
If they shall fail, I, with mine enemies,  
Will triumph o'er my person; which I weigh not,  
Being of those virtues vacant. I fear nothing  
What can be said against me.

*King:*

Know you not

How your state stands i' the world, with the whole  
world?

Your enemies are many, and not small; their practices  
Must bear the same proportion: . . .’

V. I. 113-29.

The object of the authors of *Henry VIII* is plainly to draw a contrast between the arrogant Roman churchman, Wolsey, and the humble and sincere Protestant, Cranmer, greatly to the advantage of

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the latter. To bring about this result, Cranmer's chief opponent, Gardiner, Bishop of Winchester, is scarcely treated fairly. History reveals that, of the two, Gardiner had by far the most honest and sincere character. The Archbishop of Canterbury had few real convictions, but a strong determination to stand well with the King. In the play we see Cranmer being persecuted by the Bishop. He did not forget the insult, and when his opportunity came was ready to turn the tables and pursue the other with a relentless, personal animosity, which was actuated by more than religious fervour.

Shakespeare and his collaborators wish us to believe that Cranmer displayed no bitterness towards his enemies. Left to await their pleasure at the door of the Council Chamber, he shows no rancour :

'God turn their hearts ! I never sought their malice—  
To quench mine honour : they would shame to make  
me  
Wait else at door, a fellow-councillor,  
'Mong boys, grooms and lackeys. But their pleasures  
Must be fulfill'd, and I attend with patience.'

V. 2. 15-19.

His words and mien are gentle even towards Bishop Gardiner, his fiercest accuser, until that prelate attacks his religious principles, when he is stung to retaliation :

*Cranmer :*

'Ah, my good Lord of Winchester, I thank you ;  
You are always my good friend ; if your will pass,

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I shall both find your lordship judge and juror,  
You are so merciful. I see your end ;  
'Tis my undoing. Love and meekness, lord,  
Become a churchman better than ambition :  
Win straying souls with modesty again,  
Cast none away. That I shall clear myself,  
Lay all the weight ye can upon my patience,  
I make as little doubt as you do conscience  
In doing daily wrongs. I could say more,  
But reverence to your calling makes me modest.'

V. 3. 58-69.

Cromwell, who has been instructed by the Council to collect information against Cranmer for his arraignment, becomes a warm partisan of the heretic Archbishop :

*Cromwell :*

' My mind gave me,  
In seeking tales and informations  
Against this man, whose honesty the devil  
And his disciples only envy at.' . . . .

V. 3. 109-12.

The King pays a warm tribute to Cranmer addressed to the assembled Council :

' . . . . my lords, respect him ;  
Take him and use him well ; he's worthy of it.  
I will say thus much for him, if a prince  
May be beholding to a subject, I  
Am, for his love and service, so to him.'

V. 3. 153-57.

And to the Archbishop himself he says affectionately :



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‘ Good man, those joyful tears show thy true heart :  
The common voice, I see, is verified  
Of thee, which says thus : “Do my Lord of Canterbury  
A shrewd turn, and he is your friend for ever.” ’

V. 3. 175-78.

Sir Sidney Lee remarks on this passage :

‘ According to Foxe’s *Actes*, 1576 (Vol. II. p. 1756), Cranmer’s meekness “ came into a *common* prouerbe : ‘ Do unto *my Lord of Canterbury* displeasure or a *shrewd turne*, and then you may be sure to haue him *your friend* whiles he lyueth.’ ” ‘ Shrewd ’ means ‘ evil’.

Henry crowns his favours to Cranmer by according to him the high honour of standing godfather to Princess Elizabeth. The Archbishop’s life after the supreme moment at the end of the play, in which he is moved to prophesy regarding the baby Princess, was an almost servile acquiescence in Henry’s changeable views and the furtherance of his royal master’s matrimonial designs. After the conviction of Anne Boleyn, he pronounced her marriage with the King null and void, and concurred in and pronounced the divorce of Anne of Cleves, and gave that information to the King which led to the trial and execution of Katharine Howard.

Upon the King’s death, he was named one of the Regents of the kingdom and executor of Henry’s will. He crowned his godson, Edward VI, and drew up the first ‘ Book of Common Prayer ’ in his reign. But upon the accession of Mary, he at once became the object of persecution, and was attainted of high

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treason for having signed a proclamation declaring Lady Jane Grey to be the rightful sovereign. Cranmer was found guilty, but although pardoned of the treason, was proceeded against for heresy, his old enemy, Gardiner, being prominent in his persecution. In 1554, at Oxford, he was, with Latimer and Ridley, condemned to death for refusing to subscribe to the tenets of the Romanist Faith. He was sentenced to be burnt alive, and suffered at the stake in the sixty-seventh year of his age (1556).

## CHAPTER XI

### WOLSEY'S OPPONENTS

#### *Buckingham*

CHIEF among Wolsey's opponents in *Henry VIII* are the Duke of Buckingham and a number of other nobles partly related to him. Buckingham, the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Surrey, and Lord Abergavenny conspire to maintain the authority of the old aristocracy, to whom the power in the state of the upstart Wolsey is insufferable. The Cardinal is well aware of their attitude, and does not hesitate to say so, bidding them 'Follow your envious courses, men of malice.'

The most vehemently outspoken of these is Buckingham. A man of uncontrolled temper, headstrong and insanely jealous, he will listen to no reason. Norfolk admonishes him:

'Ask God for temperance; that's the appliance only  
Which your disease requires.'

I. I. 124-25.

He personifies the arrogance of the nobility of that feudal régime which in the days of the Tudors was passing away. Their disdain for those of lowly

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origin is exemplified in the Duke's sneers regarding the Cardinal's supposed humble birth:

'A beggar's book  
Outworths a noble's blood.'

I. 1. 122-23.

At the same time, Buckingham was a man of popular virtues and accomplishments and a brilliant orator. The King, speaking of the 'noble benefits' with which he is endowed in mind and attainments, says:

'The gentleman is learn'd and a most rare speaker;  
To nature none more bound; his training such  
That he may furnish and instruct great teachers,  
And never seek for aid out of himself.

. . . . .

. . . . . This man so complete,  
Who was enroll'd 'mongst wonders, and when we,  
Almost with ravish'd listening, could not find  
His hour of speech a minute; . . . .'

I. 2. 111-14; 118-21.

In that edition of the play 'as performed at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden,' in 1773, which has been previously quoted, it is set forth: 'Buckingham should be a graceful figure, elegantly deported; with a full, distinct, declamatory voice.'

While his fate calls for regret by reason of its injustice and severity, he wins little sympathy in that it is brought about by his irrational behaviour. His unruly temperament, leading to foolish indiscretion, is his downfall. Norfolk says truly:

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' . . . there is no English soul  
More stronger to direct you than yourself,  
If with the sap of reason you would quench,  
Or but allay, the fire of passion.'

I. i. 146-49.

The nobler side of Buckingham's character is revealed after his arrest, when death is imminent:

' My life is spann'd already :  
I am the shadow of poor Buckingham,  
Whose figure even this instant cloud puts on,  
By darkening my clear sun.'

I. i. 223-26.

His intolerant animosity towards Wolsey is shown from the beginning. The Duke of Norfolk alludes to the Cardinal's prominence in staging the spectacular Field of the Cloth of Gold, upon which Buckingham exclaims harshly:

' The devil speed him ! no man's pie is freed  
From his ambitious finger. What had he  
To do in these fierce vanities ? I wonder  
That such a keech can with his very bulk  
Take up the rays o' the beneficial sun,  
And keep it from the earth.'

I. i. 52-57.

In his Stage Directions to the players in Act I, Scene 1, the dramatist emphasised his intention that the culmination of the bitter feud between the Cardinal and the Duke of Buckingham should be made a point of the first part of the play. On the entry of Wolsey and his train, interrupting the discussion between the three courtiers, the italicised

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lines read: '*The Cardinal in this passage fixeth his eye on Buckingham, and Buckingham on him, both full of disdain.*' And that Wolsey missed nothing in his enemy's regard is manifested in his remark to his secretary concerning the examination of the Duke's surveyor:

'Well, we shall then know more; and Buckingham  
Shall lessen this big look.'

I. I. 118-119.

Repeated personal affronts have aroused the dangerous hostility of the prelate, who has his own methods of snaring his enemies. He found fatal means of inciting the King against Buckingham, and so of encompassing his fall.

The Duke was the son of the Buckingham of Shakespeare's play *Richard III*. Through his descent from the eldest daughter of Thomas, Duke of Gloucester and Earl of Buckingham, youngest son of Edward III, he was next in succession in the Beaufort branch of the Lancastrian line, and heir to the throne in the event of Henry's death without issue. The Duke had been imprudent enough to make remarks occasionally to his friends on this subject, and in particular to one Charles Knyvet, the surveyor or steward of his household, whom he was afterwards obliged to discharge for ill conduct, and who then, in resentment, disclosed to Wolsey what his master had said to him and others about the succession. To refresh his memory, the play suggests that the Cardinal 'showed him gold'. The Duke was summoned to court from his palace at

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Thornbury, in Gloucestershire, and was then arrested and committed to the Tower (April 16th, 1521).

According to the surveyor's story, the Duke was plotting to seize the crown should Henry die childless, and had sworn in that event to take his revenge against Wolsey, and execute both him and Sir Thomas Lovell. This treasonable project had been suggested to Buckingham by a monk, Nicholas Hopkins, from whom a prophecy was conveyed to the Duke through his chaplain, John de la Car:

'Neither the king nor 's heirs,  
Tell you the duke, shall prosper: bid him strive  
To gain the love o' the commonalty: the duke  
Shall govern England.'

I. 2. 168-71.

The Duke's father is mentioned as having harboured the intention of murdering Richard III, his erstwhile friend and confidant; and his son is reported to have said:

' . . . . . I would have play'd  
The part my father meant to act upon  
The usurper Richard; who, being at Salisbury,  
Made suit to come in 's presence; which if granted,  
As he made semblance of his duty, would  
Have put his knife into him.'

I. 2. 194-99.

In the surveyor's examination before the King and Wolsey, Buckingham's words are so twisted against him that by inference his own intentions

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appear equally sinister. Buckingham's judges remained unmoved at his able defence. We are told:

'He pleaded still not guilty, and alleged  
Many sharp reasons to defeat the law.

. . . . .

. . . . . Much

He spoke, and learnedly, for life; . . .'

II. i. 13-14; 27-28.

When judgment was pronounced against him, the Duke's hasty temper broke out again. He 'something spoke in choler, ill and hasty,' but recollected himself in time, and 'fell to himself again, and sweetly in all the rest show'd a most noble patience.'

The sympathy of the commonalty was with Buckingham. His generosity and spectacular temperament appealed to the man in the street. This is displayed in the street scene when the Duke comes from Westminster Hall. 'I do not think he fears death,' says one onlooker to another; who replies:

'Sure, he does not:

He never was so womanish; the cause

He may a little grieve at.'

The first onlooker asserts that with 'all the commons' the Duke is one—

'They love and dote on; call him bounteous Buckingham,  
The mirror of all courtesy;—'

II. i. 37-39; 52-53.

It is at this last, on his way to the Tower, that we hear Buckingham at his best. His reported gift of golden speech is proven:



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*Buckingham:*

‘ All good people,

You that thus far have come to pity me,  
Hear what I say, and then go home and lose me.  
I have this day received a traitor’s judgement,  
And by that name must die : yet, heaven bear witness,  
And if I have a conscience, let it sink me,  
Even as the axe falls, if I be not faithful !  
The law I bear no malice for my death ;  
’T has done upon the premisses but justice :  
But those that sought it I could wish more Christians :  
Be what they will, I heartily forgive ’em :  
Yet let ’em look they glory not in mischief,  
Nor build their evils on the graves of great men ;  
For then my guiltless blood must cry against ’em.  
For further life in this world I ne’er hope,  
Nor will I sue, although the king have mercies  
More than I dare make faults. You few that loved me  
And dare be bold to weep for Buckingham,  
His noble friends and fellows, whom to leave  
Is only bitter to him, only dying,  
Go with me, like good angels, to my end,  
And, as the long divorce of steel falls on me,  
Make of your prayers one sweet sacrifice,  
And lift my soul to heaven . . . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . . I forgive all ;  
There cannot be those numberless offences  
’Gainst me, that I cannot take peace with : no black  
    envy  
Shall mark my grave. Commend me to his grace,  
And if he speak of Buckingham, pray tell him  
You met him half in heaven : my vows and prayers  
Yet are the king’s, and, till my soul forsake,

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Shall cry for blessings on him : may he live  
Longer than I have time to tell his years !  
Ever beloved and loving may his rule be !  
And when old time shall lead him to his end,  
Goodness and he fill up one monument !

. . . . .  
When I came hither, I was lord high constable  
And Duke of Buckingham ; now, poor Edward Bohun :  
Yet I am richer than my base accusers,  
That never knew what truth meant : I now seal it ;  
And with that blood will make 'em one day groan for't.

. . . . . All good people,  
Pray for me ! I must now forsake ye : the last hour  
Of my long weary life is come upon me.  
Farewell :  
And when you would say something that is sad,  
Speak how I fell. I have done ; and God forgive me ! \*

II. 1. 55-78 ; 83-94 ; 102-6 ; 131-6.

Buckingham speaks of himself as ' poor Edward Bohun.' Holinshed represents the Duke as giving himself this name on the scaffold. He was distantly descended from Humphrey Bohun, the seventh and last Earl of Hereford of the Bohun family, who died in 1373. The surname of the Duke of Buckingham was actually Stafford ; but the *History of Remarkable Trials* says : ' It seems he affected the surname (of Bohun) before that of Stafford, he being descended from the Bohuns.' From this line he inherited the distinguished office of High Constable of England. This title was forfeited at his attainder and never afterwards revived, being

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merged in the Crown. It is called out of abeyance only for coronations.

Buckingham was executed on May 17th, 1521, just one month after his arrest. When his death was reported to the Emperor Charles V, he is said to have exclaimed, 'The first buck of England was worried to death by a butcher's dog,' a satire on the supposition that Wolsey was the son of a butcher. The Duke was the fifth in his family who had died a violent death. His father was beheaded by Richard III; his grandfather fell in the battle of St. Albans; his great-grandfather was slain in the fight at Northampton; and the father of this last met his fate on the field of Shrewsbury.

### *Norfolk*

In contrast to Buckingham, the Duke of Norfolk is a man of even temper, with diplomatic instincts and unclouded vision. His reasonable philosophy is summed up in the caution and forbearance he urges on the heated Duke, whom he seeks to restrain from further provoking the dangerous enmity of the Cardinal:

*Norfolk:*

'Stay, my lord,

And let your reason with your choler question  
What 'tis you go about: to climb steep hills  
Requires slow pace at first: anger is like  
A full-hot horse, who being allow'd his way,  
Self-mettle tires him. Not a man in England  
Can advise me like you: be to yourself  
As you would to your friend.

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Be advised ;  
Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot  
That it do singe yourself : we may outrun,  
By violent swiftness, that which we run at,  
And lose by over-running. Know you not,  
The fire that mounts the liquor till 't run o'er,  
In seeming to augment it wastes it? '

I. i. 129-36 ; 139-45.

His affection for Buckingham is strong, and he is the sole person whose influence is acknowledged by the rash Duke. Although he ranged himself on the side of Wolsey's detractors, the astute old soldier confesses an admiration for the Lord Chancellor's ability in statecraft. Only when the latter is concerned in the question of the King's divorce does he express his abhorrence of the schemes of 'the king-cardinal'. It is Norfolk who supports Queen Katharine in her appeal to the King for the people oppressed by taxation, and adds his narrative of their hardships. The Duke presided at the trial of Buckingham, although this is not mentioned in the play, and pronounced the verdict in tears.

As already pointed out, the Duke of Norfolk introduced in the first Act, should not, historically, be the same person, who, after Wolsey's fall, goes with the Duke of Suffolk, the Earl of Surrey, and the Lord Chamberlain to demand of him the Great Seal, and is a member of the Council at Cranmer's arraignment. The error was due, probably, to ignorance or forgetfulness on the part of the playwrights. The first on the scene is Thomas Howard, second Duke of the Howard family (the 'Surrey' of *Richard III.*,

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and son of 'Jockey of Norfolk' who was killed at Bosworth). He commanded the English at Flodden Field, and became Duke in 1514. He was of the older generation, performing many signal services for the King, and dying in 1524, before Wolsey's fall. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Thomas, the third Duke, and the Surrey of Acts I and II.

The powerful Howards were, after Buckingham, the leaders of the old nobility, and a most important faction in home politics. In contrast to their own ancient lineage, the Tudors were but upstarts, a fact the Howards did not forget; and after the death of that tough old campaigner, the second Duke, Henry regarded the male members of the family with some suspicion. Two of his wives, Anne Boleyn and Katharine Howard, were closely related to the Howards, and both were beheaded.

Anne Boleyn was the grand-daughter of the Duke of Flodden fame, his elder daughter having married Thomas Boleyn, afterwards Viscount Rochford and Earl of Wiltshire. It was her uncle, the third Duke, however, who bore his rod of Marshalship at her coronation; while her grandmother, 'that old noble lady,' as one of the crowd calls her, carried her train.

The Surrey of the part of the play previous to the disgrace of Wolsey, who speaks of the Duke of Buckingham as 'my father-in-law' and expresses his hopes of an opportunity to avenge the latter's death, actually became Duke of Norfolk on his father's death in 1524. In Act III, Scene 2, of *Henry VIII*, however, he is still called Earl of

## WOLSEY'S OPPONENTS

Surrey. Sir Sidney Lee points out that the date of the events dramatised in this scene is 1529. His son, who now bore the title of Earl of Surrey, was less than twelve years old. This could scarcely have been the 'bold brave gentleman,' as someone in the crowd remarks in the play, who carried the rod at Anne Boleyn's coronation. A sworn enemy of the Cardinal, he is represented as possessed of almost as hasty a tongue and fiery a temper as Buckingham. The violence of his quarrel with Wolsey after the dismissal of the latter, and the abusiveness of his accusations draw a protest even from the Lord Chamberlain: 'O my lord! Press not a falling man too far!' (III. 2. 332-3.)

Some years later Norfolk aroused the King's fears that he might disturb the succession in favour of his son, who, through his grandfather, Buckingham, was of royal descent. He was, therefore, accused and convicted of high treason, but was saved by Henry's timely death a few hours before his execution. His son, the poet Earl of Surrey, one of the most brilliant scholars of his day, had previously gone to the block.

### *Suffolk*

Another of the fellow-conspirators against Wolsey, who commiserate with one another on his supremacy, and rejoice together in his downfall, is handsome, gallant Charlie Brandon, Duke of Suffolk. The son of Sir William Brandon, slain at Bosworth by Richard III, Brandon was the chosen husband of King Henry's sister, Mary, the young widow of Louis

XII of France, whom he secretly married. He was a favourite companion of Henry, who created him Duke of Suffolk in 1514. In *Henry VIII* the King shows him an affectionate regard, addressing him by his Christian name.

Suffolk never expresses himself in strong terms of Wolsey, although he is ready to communicate news of the miscarriage of the Cardinal's letters and his royal brother-in-law's growing anger. One of the Council to bear the commands of the King to Wolsey to deliver up the Great Seal, he does not address the hated favourite with acrimonious taunts like his companions. His charges are terse and direct.

Suffolk owes a good deal to Wolsey. When he made a secret and hurried marriage with Henry's sister in France, the young couple were too much afraid of the King's wrath to return until the bridegroom had written urgently to Wolsey praying that he would smooth the way for them. "I was lyke to be ondon," ran the painfully inscribed letter, "if the matter schold coume to the knollag of the Kyng me Masster." The Cardinal broke the news to Mary's brother and interceded for them to such purpose that when Charles Brandon wrote again, "I am obliged to you, next God and my Master," he told Wolsey gratefully. Over the question of the divorce the Duke assumed a blustering air with Wolsey which created a breach between them, and forgetting his obligation towards the Cardinal, Suffolk ranged himself with his friend's bitterest opponents.

## WOLSEY'S OPPONENTS

With the Duke of Norfolk, Suffolk was head of the Council, and enjoyed the full confidence of his brother-in-law, the King. He led the English expeditionary force against France, and was the victor in the battle of the Spurs.

History relates that when the news of his death reached Henry, who was then in Council, he declared that Suffolk had never made an attempt to injure an adversary, and had never whispered a word to the disadvantage of anyone.

Suffolk speaks with admiration of Anne Boleyn, and is High Steward at her coronation. He was the grandfather of the unhappy Lady Jane Grey.

### *Abergavenny*

The Lord Abergavenny, who appears in the early scenes as an opponent of Wolsey with Buckingham and the rest, was the companion in arms of the King in his French wars, and received the Order of the Garter and many high and important commands. He was Chief Larderer at the coronation of Queen Anne Boleyn. In the First Folio his name is variously spelt Aburgauenny and Aburgany, the latter being the phonetic spelling.



## THE TWO QUEENS

### CHAPTER XII

#### THE TWO QUEENS

##### *Katharine of Arragon*

DISCUSSING the play of *Henry VIII*, Dr. Johnson said 'the genius of Shakespeare comes in and goes out with Katharine.' He was much impressed with the profound effect of her last scene, and ranked it as above any scene in the works of any other dramatist for its tender pathos.

Katharine is a touching model of womanly virtue and gentleness, of conjugal devotion, and of patience in defenceless suffering.

She was born amidst the alarums of war, while her mother, Isabella of Castile, was on her way to Toledo from the Spanish army engaged in the conquest of Granada from the Moors; and the clash of wills and conflicting interests, if not of arms, seemed to surround her throughout her life.

December 15th, 1485, was the day of her birth; and her infancy was spent in the camp before Granada. In old St. Paul's she was wed to Arthur, Prince of Wales, before she or her bridegroom were sixteen years old.

The young couple kept their little court at Ludlow for five short months, until Arthur, never of strong

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constitution, fell ill and died within a few days. For seven long years the girl widow spent an unhappy and neglected existence in England, without position or influence, before she was married again with all pomp at the age of twenty-four, and took the place she had yearned for as Queen of England.

The Pope's dispensation had been duly procured, and the early years of this marriage were happy enough. Katharine had the good sense to humour Henry in his favourite diversions, while she herself lived a dignified, self-denying life of almost conventional strictness, conscientious in the performance of her religious duties, devoted to her husband, kind to her friends, charitable to her enemies, and careful of the interests of her adopted country, although, at the same time, she never forgot that she was a Spanish princess and a royal ambassadress of Spain. In the year of Flodden she was regent of the kingdom during Henry's absence in France, and performed the duties of that office with great courage and ability. But the repeated loss of children cast a gloom over those years. Two sons died almost as soon as they came into the world; Mary, a sickly daughter, was the only survivor.

And then Wolsey's quarrel with her nephew, the Emperor Charles, and the King's growing distrust of the Spanish alliance, threw a heavy shadow across her life. But it was not until 1527, when she had been his wife for eighteen years, that Henry's scruples as to the validity of his marriage became public.

However submissive Katharine might be to her

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husband in everything else, she was resolved not to allow any doubt to be cast upon the legality of their marriage or the title to the throne of her daughter, Mary, nor to surrender her rights as Queen. Katharine and Henry were not quite separated until 1531, when, finding he could not prevail upon her to withdraw her appeal to the Pope, he commanded her to retire to Windsor.

When Cranmer finally pronounced the divorce, Katharine was removed to Buckden, in Huntingdonshire, scornfully rejecting the title of Princess Dowager of Wales, to which she would have been entitled as widow of Prince Arthur, and to the last discharging every servant who accosted her by any other name than that of Queen. The legal instrument for the divorce is still in being; and among the signatures to it is that of Polydore Virgil, from whose history of these events and the remaining days of Katharine the authors of *Henry VIII* probably took some of their material.

Queen Katharine's first appearance on the stage is in the Council Chamber scene, when the King and Wolsey are about to question the Duke of Buckingham's Surveyor concerning the supposed plot instigated by the Duke. Her persistency in defending the accused Buckingham against the allegations of the Cardinal and his creature is inspired by her love of fair play and her perception of the underlying personal malice of the jealous prelate, which already she feels vaguely may soon be turned against herself. She cannot restrain her reproofs at the thinly-veiled venom of his charges. 'My

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learn'd lord cardinal, Deliver all with charity,' she advises. And to the Surveyor, whose testimony she is astute enough to discern has been prompted by spite:

*Katharine:*

‘If I know you well,  
You were the duke's surveyor, and lost your office  
On the complaint o' the tenants: take good heed  
You charge not in your spleen a noble person  
And spoil your nobler soul: I say, take heed;  
Yes, heartily beseech you.’ I. 2. 171-76.

The Queen's enmity against Wolsey is already evident. In her compassionate plea to the King for a cessation of the new taxes, which are causing so much hardship and grievance among the people, she turns to the favourite with the pointed remark:

‘My good lord cardinal, they vent reproaches  
Most bitterly on you, as putter on  
Of these exactions. . . .” I. 2. 23-25.

Wolsey's denial of sole responsibility for the imposition evokes from the indignant Katharine the indictment:

‘No, my lord,  
You know no more than others: but you frame  
Things that are known alike, which are not wholesome  
To those which would not know them, and yet must  
Perforce be their acquaintance. These exactions,  
Whereof my sovereign would have note, they are  
Most pestilent to the hearing; and, to bear 'em,  
The back is sacrifice to the load. They say  
They are devised by you; or else you suffer  
Too hard an exclamation.’ I. 2. 43-52.

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Katharine was beloved for her virtue and beneficence among the people. She is spoken of in the street as 'the good queen'; and, when the divorce is rumoured, pitied as a victim of Wolsey's revengeful pique. The Duke of Norfolk's picturesque tribute to her most aptly expresses the respect which her fidelity and worth have aroused:

*Norfolk:*

' . . . . her  
That, like a jewel, has hung twenty years  
About his neck, yet never lost her lustre,  
Of her that loves him with that excellence  
That angels love good men with, even of her  
That, when the greatest stroke of fortune falls,  
Will bless the king: '

II. 2. 31-37.

During the powerful and poignant divorce scene, Katharine becomes her own eloquent counsel, and defends her case with spirit.

*Katharine:*

' Sir, I desire you do me right and justice,  
And to bestow your pity on me; for  
I am a most poor woman, and a stranger,  
Born out of your dominions; having here  
No judge indifferent, nor no more assurance  
Of equal friendship and proceeding. Alas, sir,  
In what have I offended you? what cause  
Hath my behaviour given to your displeasure,  
That thus you should proceed to put me off,  
And take your good grace from me? Heaven witness,  
I have been to you a true and humble wife,  
At all times to your will conformable,

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Ever in fear to kindle your dislike,  
Yea, subject to your countenance, glad or sorry  
As I saw it inclined : when was the hour  
I ever contradicted your desire,  
Or made it not mine too? Or which of your friends  
Have I not strove to love, although I knew  
He were mine enemy? what friend of mine  
That had to him derived your anger, did I  
Continue in my liking? nay, gave notice  
He was from thence discharged? Sir, call to mind  
That I have been your wife, in this obedience,  
Upward of twenty years, and have been blest  
With many children by you : if in the course  
And process of this time you can report,  
And prove it too, against mine honour aught,  
My bond to wedlock or my love and duty,  
Against your sacred person, in God's name,  
Turn me away, and let the foul'st contempt  
Shut door upon me, and so give me up  
To the sharp'st kind of justice. Please you, sir,  
The king, your father, was reputed for  
A prince most prudent, of an excellent  
And unmatched wit and judgement : Ferdinand,  
My father, king of Spain, was reckon'd one  
The wisest prince that there had reign'd by many  
A year before : it is not to be question'd  
That they had gather'd a wise council to them  
Of every realm, that did debate this business,  
Who deem'd our marriage lawful : wherefore I humbly  
Beseech you, sir, to spare me, till I may  
Be by my friends in Spain advised, whose counsel  
I will implore : if not, i' the name of God,  
Your pleasure be fulfill'd !

II. 4. 13-57.

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Three Bishops of the Legate's court had been appointed to act as counsel for the queen: the Bishops of Ely, Rochester, and Saint Asaph; but although their presence is indicated in the Stage Directions, neither of these advocates has anything to say.

Katharine retains her queenly dignity to the end. Humiliation and contumely cannot subdue her proud spirit. A Princess of Spain and a Queen of England, she will not suffer the insolence of the spiteful Cardinal. His thinly-veiled malice rouses her royal temper, hitherto of such forbearing and gracious tenor. Gentle-spoken to the King, she turns the bitterness of her injury upon Wolsey.

*Katharine:*

' Sir,

I am about to weep; but, thinking that  
We are a queen, or long have dream'd so, certain  
The daughter of a king, my drops of tears  
I'll turn to sparks of fire.

*Wolsey:*

Be patient yet.

*Katharine:*

I will, when you are humble; nay, before  
Or God will punish me. I do believe,  
Induced by potent circumstances, that  
You are mine enemy, and make my challenge  
You shall not be my judge: for it is you  
Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me;  
Which God's dew quench! Therefore I say again,  
I utterly abhor, yea, from my soul  
Refuse you for my judge; whom, yet once more,  
I hold my most malicious foe, and think not  
At all a friend to truth.'

II. 4. 69-84.

## THE TWO QUEENS

At the end, disappointed at the neutral attitude of Cardinal Campcius, driven to desperation by the cold hostility of Wolsey and the silence of the King, Katharine becomes overwrought by her own impassioned pleading and resistance, and ends on a note of hysteria. Although we may conclude that she appeared before the court having fully resolved to carry her appeal beyond its jurisdiction to the Papal throne, her manner of doing so comes as a final outburst before she sweeps haughtily from the hall, exclaiming to her attendant:

‘ . . . . Now the Lord help!  
They vex me past my patience. Pray you, pass on :  
I will not tarry, no, nor ever more  
Upon this business my appearance make  
In any of their courts.’

II. 4. 129-33.

The King, when she has gone, offers Katharine this glowing tribute:

‘ Go thy ways, Kate :  
That man i’ the world who shall report he has  
A better wife, let him in nought be trusted,  
For speaking false in that : thou art, alone,  
If thy rare qualities, sweet gentleness,  
Thy meekness saint-like, wife-like government,  
Obeying in commanding, and thy parts  
Sovereign and pious else, could speak thee out,  
The queen of earthly queens. She’s noble born ;  
And, like her true nobility, she has  
Carried herself towards me.’

II. 4. 133-43.



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With leisure for reflection after her appearance before the court at Black-Friars, the gentle-natured Queen moderates her distrust of Wolsey and his colleague, Campeius.

*Katharine :*

‘ Now I think on ’t,  
They should be good men, their affairs as righteous :  
But all hoods make not monks.’

III. 1. 21-23.

‘ Ye speak like honest men ; pray God, ye prove so ! ’ she says to them (*ibid* 1.69). But she quickly discerns the hypocrisy of the arguments of the two churchmen, and is once more stung to scorn. Her piteous plea, ‘ Alas, I am a woman, friendless, hopeless ! ’ changes as her patience becomes exhausted and her royal Spanish blood rises in revolt.

*Katharine :*

‘ Ye tell me what ye wish for both, my ruin :  
Is this your Christian counsel ? out upon ye !  
Heaven is above all yet ; there sits a judge  
That no king can corrupt.

. . . . .

Have I lived thus long—let me speak myself,  
Since virtue finds no friends—a wife, a true one ?  
A woman, I dare say without vain-glory,  
Never yet branded with suspicion ?  
Have I with all my full affections  
Still met the king ? loved him next heaven ?  
obey’d him ?  
Been, out of fondness, superstitious to him ?  
Almost forgot my prayers to content him ?  
And am I thus rewarded ? ’tis not well, lords.

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Bring me a constant woman to her husband,  
One that ne'er dream'd a joy beyond his pleasure,  
And to that woman, when she has done most,  
Yet will I add an honour, a great patience.

. . . . .  
My lord, I dare not make myself so guilty,  
To give up willingly that noble title  
Your master wed me to : nothing but death  
Shall e'er divorce my dignities.'

III. 1. 98-101 ; 125-37 ; 139-42.

Womanlike, her bold spirit softens as the provoked  
outburst wears out her strength. Mentally wearied  
with the hopeless fight she wages, she gives way at  
last to her distress :

*Katharine :*

'Would I had never trod this English earth,  
Or felt the flatteries that grow upon it !  
Ye have angels' faces, but heaven knows your hearts.  
What will become of me now, wretched lady !  
I am the most unhappy woman living.  
. . . . . no kindred weep for me ;  
Almost no grave allow'd me : like the lily,  
That once was mistress of the field and flourish'd,  
I'll hang my head and perish.'

III. 1. 143-7 ; 150-3.

Recovering a little, this sorely tried woman wins  
the calm of resignation :

*Katharine :*

'Do what ye will, my lords : and pray forgive me,  
If I have used myself unmannerly ;  
You know I am a woman, lacking wit  
To make a seemly answer to such persons.

## THE TWO QUEENS

Pray do my service to his majesty :  
He has my heart yet, and shall have my prayers  
While I shall have my life. Come, reverend fathers,  
Bestow your counsels on me : she now begs,  
That little thought, when she set footing here,  
She should have bought her dignities so dear.'

III. 1. 175-84.

In the midst of her distress, the gentle-hearted Queen thinks of others beside herself. A first thought is for her attendants, who must share her reverse of fortune :

*Katharine :*

'Alas, poor wenches, where are now your fortunes?  
Shipwreck'd upon a kingdom, where no pity,  
No friends, no hope; . . . '

III. 1. 148-50.

Perforce, Cardinal Campeius admits to her that she has 'a noble spirit.'

Once more we see her at Kimbolton,—or Kymmalton, as it appears in the First Folio,—a sick woman. Hearing of the death of Wolsey, 'an old man, broken with the storms of state,' the recollection of her humiliations and sufferings at his hands causes Katharine to speak bitterly of his double-dealing and ruthlessness. But after her gentleman-usher, Griffith, has reminded her of the Cardinal's better deeds, his encouragement of learning and the arts, a forgiving spirit towards her old enemy returns: 'Whom I most hated living, . . . Now in his ashes honour: peace be with him!' (IV. 2. 73-75).

## THE TWO QUEENS

In Shakespeare's plays an appreciation of music is a mark of gentle character. Twice does Queen Katharine turn to music as a solace. Her soul 'sad with troubles' after the divorce trial, she bids her waiting woman 'Sing, and disperse 'em, if thou canst.' As she lies dying at Kimbolton, she again asks for music:

' Good Griffith,  
Cause the musicians play me that sad note  
I named my knell, whilst I sit meditating  
On that celestial harmony I go to.'

IV. 2. 77-80.

The Stage Directions read *Sad and solemn music*.

Always the deposed Queen speaks with anxious interest of the King. She is pleased to hear of his well-being, but exclaims sadly on receiving a message of good-will from him:

'. . . that comfort comes too late;  
'Tis like a pardon after execution:  
That gentle physic, given in time, had cured me;  
But now I am past all comforts here but prayers.  
How does his highness?

*Capucius:*

Madam, in good health.

*Katherine:*

So may he ever do! and ever flourish,' . . .

IV. 2. 120-25.

Her last letter to Henry yet breathes the affection she has never lost, and is full of thoughtfulness for others. She describes its contents—

## THE TWO QUEENS

' . . . . I have commended to his goodness  
The model of our chaste loves, his young daughter,—  
The dews of heaven fall thick in blessing on her!—  
Beseeching him to give her virtuous breeding—  
She is young and of a noble modest nature :  
I hope she will deserve well—and a little  
To love her for her mother's sake, that loved him,  
Heaven knows how dearly. My next poor petition  
Is that his noble grace would have some pity  
Upon my wretched women, that so long  
Have follow'd both my fortunes faithfully :  
Of which there is not one, I dare avow,—  
And now I should not lie,—but will deserve,  
For virtue and true beauty of the soul,  
For honesty and decent carriage,  
A right good husband, let him be a noble :  
And, sure, those men are happy that shall have 'em.  
The last is, for my men ; they are the poorest,  
But poverty could never draw 'em from me ;  
That they may have their wages duly paid 'em,  
And something over to remember me by :  
If heaven had pleased to have given me longer life  
And able means, we had not parted thus.  
These are the whole contents : and, good my lord,  
By that you love the dearest in this world,  
As you wish Christian peace to souls departed,  
Stand these poor people's friend, and urge the king  
To do me this last right.'

IV. 2. 131-58.

This letter probably fell into the hands of Polydore Virgil, who was then in England. He gives the text of it in his history. Holinshed also includes a paraphrase of its contents.

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The letter ran thus:

‘My most dear lord, king, and husband,—

The hour of my death now approaching, I cannot choose, but out of the love I bear you, advise you of your soul’s health, which you ought to prefer before all considerations of the world or flesh whatsoever; for which yet you have cast me into many calamities, and yourself into many troubles. But I forgive you all, and pray God to do so likewise. For the rest I commend unto you Mary, our daughter, beseeching you to be a good father to her, as I have heretofore desired. I must entreat you also to respect my maids, and give them in marriage (which is not much, they being but three), and to all my other servants a year’s pay beside their due, lest otherwise they should be unprovided for. Lastly, I make this vow that mine eyes desire you above all things.—Farewell.’

One womanly weakness history and the playwrights have imputed to Katharine in her dignified retirement—even at the moment of approaching death she exacts the deference due to the royal honour which has been hers. To the last she clings to her status as queen and wife. With pitiful insistence she directs her chief attendant:

‘When I am dead, good wench,  
Let me be used with honour: strew me over  
With maiden flowers, that all the world may know  
I was a chaste wife to my grave: embalm me,  
Then lay me forth; although unqueen’d, yet like  
A queen, and daughter to a king, inter me.’

IV. 2. 167-72.

In weary spirit she concludes, ‘I can no more’.  
And so Katharine of Arragon passes from the play.

## THE TWO QUEENS

This much-tried woman died at Kimbolton Castle early in 1536, at the age of fifty, and was buried in Peterborough Cathedral, where her monument is a simple black slab provided by the Katharines of England. Sir Edmund Bedyngfield wrote to Cromwell from Kimbolton :

‘This 7th day of January (1536), about ten of the clock before noon, the Lady-dowager was aneled with the holy ointment, Master Chamberlain and I called to the same, and before two of the clock at afternoon she departed to God.’

### *Katharine's Attendants*

Two attendants on the Queen are named in the *Dramatis Personæ*, Griffith, her ‘Gentleman-usher’, and Patience, her waiting-woman. According to the earlier editions of *Henry VIII*, in the trial scene it is simply a ‘gentleman-usher’ who tells Katharine as she leaves, ‘Madam, you are call’d back,’ and receives the sharp rebuke :

‘What need you note it? pray you, keep your way :  
When you are call’d, return.’

II. 4. 128-29.

Malone, following Holinshed’s account, names Griffith in this part, and so he now appears in some editions of the play.

At Kimbolton it falls to Griffith to tell Katharine of Wolsey’s death. He is one who aims at fair judgment, and his respect for the Cardinal’s learning and princely qualities cause him to represent them to her. In return for his defence of her dead enemy, and knowing Griffith’s sincerity, she says :

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' After my death I wish no other herald,  
No other speaker of my living actions,  
To keep mine honour from corruption,  
But such an honest chronicler as Griffith.'

IV. 2. 69-72.

Patience, ' that good wench ', has the task of writing the letter to the King at the Queen's dictation,

*Katharine :*

' Patience, is that letter,  
I caused you write, yet sent away?

*Patience :*

No, madam.'

IV. 2. 126-28.

### *Capucius*

Capucius, the Ambassador from Katharine's nephew, Charles V, Emperor of Austria and Spain, who visits her at Kimbolton, was actually Eustachio Chapuys. The Queen was particularly fond of the Emperor Charles, and at one time there had been proposals of a marriage between him and her daughter, Mary.

### *Anne Boleyn*

Anne Boleyn, or Bullen as she is called in the play, is a mere sketch beside the character of Queen Katharine. Shakespeare, Gervinus remarks:

' has pourtrayed this "fresh fish", the rising queen, only from a distance, he has rather declared than exhibited her beauty, her loveliness, and chastity, her completeness in mind and feature; he does not attempt to enlist us exces-



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sively in her favour, when he exhibits her so merry in the society of a Sands; moreover all place greater stress upon the blessing which is to descend from her, than upon herself.'

Her character, as it is drawn in *Henry VIII*, might be summed up as light-heartedness. She is not shown as a woman of deep feeling, and does not bear the stamp of one of Shakespeare's heroines. On the other hand, she is of a similar type to the young women of colourless nature who appear in Fletcher's dramas.

Anne's name is variously spelt Bullen, Bulleyne, Bouleyn, Boullan, and Bolcyn. It is Bullen in the *Dramatis Personæ* of *Henry VIII*; but usually Boleyn in modern histories.

She was the daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn, the representative of an ancient line in Norfolk, who had filled important offices of state. Her mother was Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Duke of Norfolk.

There is considerable obscurity regarding the date of her birth, which is variously stated as 1501 and 1507. The earlier date is the more probable.

In her childhood Anne accompanied Henry VIII's sister Mary to France upon her marriage with Louis XII. When Mary was widowed soon afterwards, the young Maid-in-Waiting remained in the service of the new Queen Claude. At the French Court she was celebrated for her attractiveness, talents and accomplishments. She probably returned to England about 1522, although five years

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later has been mentioned by some authorities, and was appointed a Maid of Honour to Queen Katharine.

Her father was created Viscount Rochford in 1525. He bore that title, therefore, at the time of Wolsey's banquet, but not at the premature date to which the playwright's have advanced that particular entertainment, the incidents at which were to have such far-reaching effects. In any case, it is generally believed that the King first took notice of Anne at a royal entertainment at Greenwich Palace. Previous to this he had been attracted by her mother, and by her elder sister, Mary Boleyn, but promptly transferred his interest to the vivacious younger girl.

Henry prevented and caused to be set aside Anne's intended marriage with Lord Percy, eldest son of the Earl of Northumberland; and by 1529 she was in high favour at court. In three years she received from the royal wardrobe articles of clothing to the value of nearly five hundred pounds, with money and presents of various kinds from King and courtiers. Hall, referring to the year 1530, says:

'There was a gentlewoman in the court called Anne Bulleyne, daughter to Sir Thomas Bulleyne, Viscount Rochford, whom the king favoured in all honesty.'

The love-letters which passed during these years between the love-sick and ardent Henry and his sweetheart Anne are still in existence, and reveal with what tantalising prudence the future Queen played for a wedding-ring and a crown. Anne was

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made Marchioness of Pembroke in the Autumn of 1532, and accompanied the King on a state visit to France. She was secretly married to him in January the next year; in April she was openly proclaimed Queen; and after Cranmer's pronouncement of the divorce between the King and Queen Katharine in May, she was crowned with great pomp in Westminster Abbey. Her daughter Elizabeth was born the following September 7th,—a disappointment to the eager parents, who had hoped for a son and heir to the throne.

We first see this future Queen as a guest at York Place, where she exchanges merry badinage with the impudent Lord Sands. When the King enters, masked and disguised, he chooses her from among the other ladies as his partner for the dance, addressing her with admiration:

*King:*

'The fairest hand I ever touch'd! O beauty,  
Till now I never knew thee!'

I. 4. 75-76.

'By heaven, she is a dainty one,' he exclaims, when the Lord Chamberlain names her to him: 'Sir Thomas Bullen's daughter, the Viscount Rochford, one of her highness' women.' (ibid 92-93.)

Anne has no lines to speak in reply to Henry's attentions. Bright glances, and, perchance, soft whispers, are her portion. Henry's apparently amorous remark to his fair partner: 'I were unmannerly to take you out, And not to kiss you,' was, however, no more than an expected courtesy.

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A kiss was anciently the established fee of a lady's partner. In a Dialogue between 'Custom and Veretie,' concerning the use and abuse of 'Dauncing and Minstrelsie,' 'imprinted at London at the long shop adjoining unto Saint Mildred's Church in the Pultrie, by John Allde,' it is stated:

'But some reply, what foole would daunce,  
If not when daunce is doon,  
He may not have at ladyes lips  
That which in daunce he woon?'

Anne's beauty is stressed on several occasions. An onlooker in the crowd at her coronation exclaims:

'Heaven bless thee!  
Thou hast the sweetest face I ever look'd on.  
Sir, as I have a soul, she is an angel;'

IV. 1. 43-45.

Another remarks on 'the beauty of her person.' Sir Thomas Lovell calls her 'sweet lady', and says of her, 'she's a good creature.' The Viscount Chateaubriand, one of the courtiers of Francis I, has left us the following eulogistic description of the personal attainments of Anne Boleyn:

'She possessed a great talent for poetry, and when she sung, like a second Orpheus, she would have made bears and wolves attentive. She likewise danced the English dances, leaping and jumping with infinite grace and agility. Moreover, she invented many new figures and steps, which are yet known by her name, or of those of the gallant partners with whom she danced them. She was well skilled in all games fashionable at courts. Besides singing

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like a syren, accompanying herself on the lute, she harped better than King David, and handled cleverly both lute and rebec (a little violin with three strings). She dressed with marvellous taste, and devised new modes, which were followed by the fairest ladies of the French court, but none wore them with her gracefulness, in which she rivalled Venus.'

The dramatists could not help suggesting that Anne's personal beauty and accomplishments had been handed down to her daughter, and courtier-like allusions to Queen Elizabeth are discernible in several passages. Historical evidence, however, suggests that Anne's fascination lay not so much in exceptional physical gifts as in her personality.

The feather-brained Maid of Honour is made to speak with affectionate regard of the unhappy Katharine:

'So good a lady that no tongue could ever  
Pronounce dishonour of her—by my life,  
She never knew harm-doing—O, now, after  
So many courses of the sun enthroned,  
Still growing in a majesty and pomp, the which  
To leave a thousand-fold more bitter than  
'Tis sweet at first to acquire—after this process,  
To give her the avaunt! it is a pity  
Would move a monster.'

. . . . .  
. . . . . Verily,

I swear, 'tis better to be lowly born,  
And range with humble livers in content,  
Than to be perk'd up in a glistening grief,  
And wear a golden sorrow.'

II. 3. 3-11; 18-22.

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She feigns to despise the pomps and isolation of queen's estate, but is evidently greatly diverted at the lewd raillery of the Old Lady with its broad hints regarding the King's growing interest. The Old Lady fully understands the insincerity of Anne's shallow nature, and is not deceived by the future Queen's affected denials and protest :

'How you do talk !

I swear again, I would not be a queen  
For all the world.'

II. 3. 44-46.

No sooner has she spoken thus, than the Lord Chamberlain enters, and without any preliminaries whatever, without adducing any reasons, announces to her that the King has been pleased to bestow on her the title of Marchioness of Pembroke, together with a pension. She accepts this boon, which is apparently entirely unexpected, without hesitation, but with a becoming modesty and deference :

*Anne :*

'I do not know

What kind of my obedience I should tender ;

More than my all is nothing : nor my prayers

Arc not words duly hallow'd, nor my wishes

More worth than empty vanities ; yet prayers and  
wishes

Arc all I can return. Beseech your lordship,

Vouchsafe to speak my thanks and my obedience,

As from a blushing handmaid, to his highness,

Whose health and royalty I pray for.'

II. 3. 65-73.

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(The Marquisate of Pembroke was a royal title which had been borne by the King's late uncle, Jasper Tudor. The patent gave Anne precedence, and her heirs after her, over all the other Marchionesses in England.) The Old Lady does not even now succeed in making the new peeress betray her real feelings or ambitions.

*Anne:*

‘ Good lady,  
Make yourself mirth with your particular fancy,  
And leave me out on’t.’

II. 3. 100-03.

There is nothing malicious about Anne. She takes no part in the humiliation of Queen Katharine. After this incident of her own preferment, Anne remembers the lonely Queen.

*Anne:*

‘ The queen is comfortless, and we forgetful  
In our long absence : pray, do not deliver  
What here you’ve heard to her.’

II. 3. 105-07.

In the play Wolsey appears to underrate the influence of that ‘ creature of the queen’s, Lady Anne Bullen.’ To this statesman’s mind she is merely a pawn, to be swept aside at will.

*Wolsey:*

‘ Anne Bullen ! No ; I’ll no Anne Bullens for him :  
There’s more in’t than fair visage. Bullen !  
No, we’ll no Bullens . . . . .’

and

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'The late queen's gentlewoman, a knight's daughter,  
To be her mistress' mistress! the queen's queen!  
This candle burns not clear: 'tis I must snuff it;  
Then out it goes. What though I know her virtuous  
And well deserving? yet I know her for  
A spleeny (i.e. *hot-headed*) Lutheran; . . .'

III. 2. 87-8; 94-9.

The Boleyn family were known to favour the Reformed doctrines, the advancement of which Wolsey was resisting with all his power. The Chronicle states.

'The Cardinal of York was advised that the king had set his affections upon a young gentlewoman named Anne . . . which did wait upon the queen. This was a great grief unto the Cardinal, as he perceived aforehand, that the king would marrie the said gentlewoman if the divorce took place. Wherefore he began with all diligence to disappoint the match, which by reason of the misliking he had to the woman, he judged ought to be avoided more than present death.'

It would have suited Wolsey much better could Henry have been persuaded to ally himself with the Duchess of Alençon, and so secure to the ambitious Cardinal the good interest of the French King when the Papal chair became vacant. He was too late, however. As the Lord Chamberlain remarks regarding the failure of the prelate's schemes:

' . . . . . in this point  
All his tricks founder, and he brings his physic  
After his patient's death: the king already  
Hath married the fair lady.'

III. 2. 39-42.



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After his disgrace Wolsey confesses :

‘ There was the weight that pull’d me down. O Cromwell,  
The king has gone beyond me : all my glories  
In that one woman I have lost for ever : . . . ’

III. 2. 407-9.

The King was secretly married to his second wife on St. Paul’s Day.

‘ On the morning of that day at a very early hour,’ says a contemporary quoted in Agnes Strickland’s *Lives of the Queens of England*, ‘ Dr. Rowland Lee, one of the royal chaplains, received the unwonted order to celebrate mass in an unfrequented attic in the west turret of Whitehall. There he found the king attended by Norris and Heneage, two of the grooms of the chamber, and the Marchioness of Pembroke accompanied by her train-bearer, Anne Savage, afterwards Lady Berkely. On being required to perform the mystical rite between his sovereign and the Marchioness in the presence of the three witnesses assembled, the chaplain hesitated, but Henry is said to have assured him that the Pope had pronounced in favour of the divorce, and that he had the dispensation for a second marriage in his possession.’

Although she appears as the central figure of that gorgeous spectacle of royal pageantry, her coronation, Queen Anne has nothing further to say in the play. A minute account of this event is given by the chronicler Hall, and also by Cavendish. On this occasion the new Queen wore a surcoat and robe of purple velvet, furred with ermine, her hair hanging down under a coil, with a circlet about it full of rich stones. The Barons of the Cinque Ports, who carried the canopy over her, were, according

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to Cavendish, 'all in crimson, with points of blue and red hanging on to their sleeves.' The ladies, 'being Lords' wives,' that followed her—

'had surcoats of scarlet with narrow sleeves, the breast all lettice (fur), with bars of borders (rows of ermine), according to their degree, and over that they had mantles of scarlet furred, and every mantle had lettice about the neck, like a neckercher, likewise powdered (with ermine), so that by the powderings their degree was known. Then followed ladies being knights' wives, in gowns of scarlet with narrow sleeves, without trains, only edged with lettice.'

The queen's gentlewomen were similarly attired with the last. The Lord Chamberlain wore a robe of scarlet, open before, and bordered with lettice. The Dukes were in crimson velvet, furred with ermine, and powdered according to their degrees. The Duke of Suffolk's doublet and jacket were set with orient pearls; his gown of crimson velvet, richly embroidered; and he carried a white rod in his hand, being that day High Steward of England. The Knights of the Bath wore 'velvet gowns, with hoods purpled with miniver, like doctors.'

The play itself ends on a high note a few months later. The sequel for Anne was not so happy. Of her history for the next two years little is known. She favoured the Reformation and promoted the translation of the Bible. But during 1536 Henry transferred his affections to Jane Seymour, one of her Maids of Honour. The Queen was accused of infidelity by Lady Rochford, her sister-in-law, and others who were her enemies. She was arraigned

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before a special commission, of which her uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, was president, found guilty, and two days afterwards condemned to death. The sitting of the court was secret, and the records reveal that the trial was a mockery of justice. Warner, the critic, says:

‘It must be remembered of Anne that he (Shakespeare) leaves her at her coronation before the faintest suspicion against her purity had been whispered. What she became after the birth of Elizabeth will always be a fiercely disputed question. It is quite possible that her lightness of mind, and shallowness of spiritual culture, acted upon by what she too well knew to be the fickleness of the king, developed into indiscretions, and hardened into selfishness. Contemporary accounts are confusing and neutralize each other. If the burden of testimony is against Anne, it must be remembered that contemporary testimony is apt to be swayed by undue influence.’

Cranmer, who had crowned her, pronounced the dissolution of Anne’s marriage with the King ‘in consequence of certain lawful impediments confessed by her,’ but at the same time he wrote a very pathetic letter to Henry on her behalf, in which he vowed her to be ‘one of the best of women,’ and ‘that her affection towards his majesty was unquestionable.’ On the 19th of May, 1536, she was beheaded on the green before the Tower, and died with great courage, denying her guilt. ‘Her body was thrown into a common chest of elm tree, used to put arrows in.’ So perished that ‘sweet lady’ who ‘would not be a queen.’

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### *Old Lady*

The only companion, with whom Anne Boleyn is associated, is that shrewd Old Lady, a character altogether of Shakespeare's own creation and, therefore, of an interest beyond her actual importance in the play. Is she perhaps meant for Mrs. Shelton, Anne's aunt, and the future governess of Princess Mary? In the *Dramatis Personæ* of the First Folio she appears merely as 'an old lady'. One commentator remarks that she is 'rather a vulgar old baggage' when compared with the other characters, and more resembling Juliet's nurse than a court lady.

Regarding the Stage Direction in Scene 1 of Act V, 'Enter an old lady' to announce to the King the birth of the baby Princess, the commentator Steevens says, 'This, I suppose, is the same old cat that appears with Anne Boleyn.' Her excitement and agitation in announcing the happy event are such that, in reply to the King's expression of hope for a son, she is seized with perturbation, and in her confusion makes the extraordinary mis-statement that the child is a boy, although she corrects herself immediately:

' . . . a lovely boy: the God of heaven  
Both now and ever bless her! 'tis a girl,  
Promises boys hereafter.'

V. 1. 165-67.

Greedy for reward for her good news, she slyly tells the King ' 'Tis as like you As cherry is to cherry.' A hundred marks does not satisfy her rapacity:

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*Old Lady:*

'An hundred marks! By this light, I'll ha' more.  
An ordinary groom is for such payment.  
I will have more, or scold it out of him.  
Said I for this, the girl was like to him?  
I will have more, or else unsay 't; and now,  
While it is hot, I'll put it to the issuc.'

V. I. 171-76.

## CHAPTER XIII

### SHAKESPEARE AND QUEEN ELIZABETH

ON the Elizabethan stage royal and distinguished personages, prominent in events of the moment, were freely introduced, either in the most transparent disguises, or in none at all. Queen Elizabeth herself, her court and ministers, actually appeared in character on the stage, so it is not surprising that Shakespeare and his fellow-playwrights made unrestricted use of incidents in the lives of Kings and Queens whose deaths had occurred within recent memory. There is much to indicate that the Dramatist kept his finger on the pulse of popular feeling, and consciously humoured the tastes of playgoers of his period. He wrote for a national mind convinced of the Divine Right of Kings, eager for spectacle and pageantry, and persuaded of the high destiny of the race.

From an inconsiderable kingdom, constantly fretted by civil strife and exhausted by wars with France, England had risen under the astute Tudor monarchs to a place in the sun of Europe. She had become a strong factor in the balance of power, which centred between the Empire of Austria and Spain, France and this country. The first foundations of our overseas Empire had been laid with the colonisation of Virginia; and foreign trade, in-

augurated by Henry VII, nursed and protected by Henry VIII, and widely developed by private enterprise in the reign of Elizabeth, was firmly established and bringing wealth and power.

Queen Elizabeth, with her greatness, wisdom, and renown as the Virgin Queen, was respected and loved by her people, to whom she became almost a legendary figure after her death as 'Good Queen Bess.' It was the habit of writers of the period to eulogise the Queen, her person, and mental attainments, in the most extravagant phrases. Sir Sidney Lee remarks:

'That the whole language of love was applied by Elizabethan poets to their more or less professional intercourse with those who appreciated and encouraged their literary activities is convincingly illustrated by the mass of verse which was addressed to the greatest of all patrons of Elizabethan poetry—the Queen. The poets who sought her favour not merely commended the beauty of her mind and body, with the semblance of amorous ecstacy; they carried their protestations of 'love' to the extreme limits of realism; they seasoned their notes of adoration with reproaches of inconstancy and infidelity, which they clothed in peculiarly intimate phraseology. Edmund Spenser, Sir Walter Raleigh, Richard Barnfield, and Sir John Davies were among many of Shakespeare's contemporaries who wrote of their sovereign with a warmth that would mislead any reader who ignores the current conventions of the amorous vocabulary.'

When Raleigh was confined in the Tower, he wrote to Cecil that he was overcome with misery because he could no longer see the Queen:

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"I, that was wont to behold her riding like Alexander, hunting like Diana, walking like Venus, the gentle wind blowing her fair hair about her pure cheeks like a nymph; sometimes singing like an angel, sometimes playing like Orpheus."

Raleigh doubtless hoped that Cecil would show his letter to Elizabeth, who was then in her fifty-ninth year.

Elizabeth was not unaware of Shakespeare's existence or of his talent. We have Ben Jonson's testimony of how the Queen and her successor appreciated the Poet-Dramatist's work in his well-known lines:

'Those flights upon the Banks of Thames,  
That so did take Eliza, and our James!'

While she held her court at Greenwich Palace at Christmas, 1594, she evinced personal interest in the young actor-playwright, of whom she had heard much from those around her, and summoned him to act before her with his 'fellows,' Burbage and Kemp, the two most noted actors of the day.

Sir Sidney Lee relates how, at the suggestion of the young Earl of Southampton, Shakespeare's patron, the Lord Chamberlain in the week preceding Christmas sent word to the Theatre in Shoreditch, where the Poet was at work, that he was expected at court on two days following Christmas in order to give his sovereign on both evenings a taste of his quality. He was to appear in his own plays. For the performances the company received, upon the Council's warrant, the sum of £13.6.8, and "by way of her Majesty's favour", £6.13.4.



Until the end of her reign Shakespeare's dramas were repeatedly acted in her presence, and the tradition persists that his royal patroness's expressed wish to see Falstaff in love, as he is presented at war in *Henry IV*, brought into being that inimitable comedy, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

Not long after his first appearance before her Majesty, Shakespeare was engaged in the composition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The famous passage in this play in which Oberon commands Puck to fetch him that herb, the "little western flower, called by maidens love-in-idleness", has always been understood as a complimentary reference to Elizabeth, the "fair vestal throned by the west", in the romantic style popularised by contemporary poets.

*Henry VIII*, however, in which Elizabeth is not only mentioned by name, but carried on to the stage as an infant, was not, it is almost certain, produced during her lifetime. It was not to gratify her late Majesty, but to please their public, with whom her memory remained immensely popular, that the co-authors made such laudatory references to her personality and the illustrious nature of her rule.

Dr. R. Carruthers points out:

'It seems certain that *Henry VIII* was not produced till after Elizabeth's death. No poet would have dared to hint at the death of the queen while she lived; and Cranmer's prophecy in the fifth act speaks of the death of Elizabeth and of her successor James.'

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Many panegyrics of Elizabeth appeared during the reign of her successor. The translators of the Bible in 1611 coupled the name of King James in their address to him with 'that bright Occidental Star, Queen Elizabeth, of most happy memory.' But it is a matter for doubt whether Elizabeth would have been altogether pleased at hearing herself referred to in *Henry VIII* as 'an aged princess', by the *prominence and sympathy accorded to the virtues of Queen Katharine*, and the dubious morality of her father in the matter of the divorce and his associations with her mother, Anne Boleyn, before their marriage was made public.

There are several allusions to the future Queen before Cranmer's prophetic speech at her christening brings the piece to a triumphant close. Reflecting on the possibility that Anne Boleyn may become Queen, the Lord Chamberlain debates:

'. . . . . who knows yet  
But from this lady may proceed a gem  
To lighten all the isle?'  
II. 3. 77-79.

The Duke of Suffolk, speaking of Anne's approaching coronation, says:

'She is a gallant creature and complete  
In mind and feature: I persuade me, from her  
Will fall some blessing to this land, which shall  
In it be memorized.'  
III. 2. 49-52.

Elizabeth's father signalled his trust and favour in Archbishop Cranmer by inviting him to stand godfather to the child.

*King:*

‘ . . . My Lord of Canterbury,  
I have a suit which you must not deny me :  
That is, a fair young maid that yet wants baptism,  
You must be godfather, and answer for her.’

V. 3. 160-63.

The Princess was christened on September 10th, 1533, in the church of Grey Friars near Greenwich Palace, when she was only three days old. Describing the splendid scene of pageantry which was the setting for this state ceremony, Agnes Strickland, in her *Lives of the Queens of England*, writes:

‘ When all things were ready the child was brought into the hall of the palace, and the procession set out to the neighbouring church of the Grey Friars ; of which building no vestige now remains at Greenwich. The procession began with the lowest rank, the citizens two and two led the way, then gentlemen, esquires, and chaplains ; after them the aldermen, and the lord mayor by himself, then the privy-council in robes, then the peers and prelates, followed by the Earl of Essex, who bore the gilt-covered basins ; then the Marquis of Exeter, with the taper of virgin wax ; next the Marquis of Dorset, bearing the salt, and then the Lady Mary of Norfolk (the betrothed of the young Duke of Richmond), carrying the chrisom, which was very rich with pearls and gems ; lastly came the royal infant, in the arms of her great grandmother, the dowager Duchess of Norfolk, under a stately canopy which was supported by the uncle of the babe, George Boleyn, Lord Rochford, the Lords William and Thomas Howard, the maternal kindred of the mother, and Lord Hussey, a newly-made lord of the Boleyn blood. The babe was wrapped in a mantle of purple velvet, with a train of regal length,

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furred with ermine, which was duly supported by the Countess of Kent, assisted by the Earl of Wiltshire, the grandfather of the little princess, and the Earl of Derby. On the right of the infant, marched its great uncle, the Duke of Norfolk, with his marshal's staff—on the other, the Duke of Suffolk.'

The order of the procession returning to the Palace after the ceremony is minutely detailed in the Stage Directions, and corresponds with the above authentic account.

The 'standing-bowls for the christening gifts' carried by two noblemen, according to the Stage Directions, were the gifts of the godparents, Cranmer, the Duchess of Norfolk, and the Marchioness of Dorset. 'Come, come, my lord,' Henry says to the Archbishop, 'you'd spare your spoons: you shall have two noble partners with you; the old Duchess of Norfolk, and Lady Marquess Dorset,' (V. 3. 167-70). Sir Sidney Lee remarks that spoons were 'the usual gifts of sponsors at a christening; usually they were gilt spoons with figures of the twelve Apostles carved on the handles, and were known as Apostles' spoons. According to Holinshed, however, Cranmer's gift was 'a standing-cup of gold.' This was a bowl on a stand or feet. The sponsors were addressed by the King as 'my noble gossips.'

There follows the prophetic peroration of Cranmer upon the theme of the future Queen's glorious reign, and the equally happy accession of James I. This is in the most popular manner of the period, suited to the mood of the national mind,

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voicing the sentiments of the English people, their patriotism and loyal enthusiasm for the throne.

*Granmer :*

‘ Let me speak, sir,

For heaven now bids me ; and the words I utter  
Let none think flattery, for they’ll find ’em truth.  
This royal infant—heaven still move about her !—  
Though in her cradle, yet now promises  
Upon this land a thousand thousand blessings,  
Which time shall bring to ripeness : she shall be—  
But few now living can behold that goodness—  
A pattern to all princes living with her,  
And all that shall succeed : Saba was never  
More covetous of wisdom and fair virtue  
Than this pure soul shall be : all princely graces,  
That mould up such a mighty piece as this is,  
With all the virtues that attend the good,  
Shall still be doubled on her : truth shall nurse her,  
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her :  
She shall be loved and fear’d : her own shall bless her ;  
Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,  
And hang their heads with sorrow. Good grows with  
her :

In her days every man shall eat in safety,  
Under his own vine, what he plants, and sing  
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours :  
God shall be truly known ; and those about her  
From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,  
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood.  
Nor shall this peace sleep with her ; but, as when  
The bird of wonder dies, the maiden phoenix,  
Her ashes new create another heir,  
As great in admiration as herself,  
So shall she leave her blessedness to one—

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When heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness—

Who from the sacred ashes of her honour  
Shall star-like rise, as great in fame as she was,  
And so stand fix'd. Peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,  
That were the servants to this chosen infant,  
Shall then be his, and like a vine grow to him :  
Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine,  
His honour and the greatness of his name  
Shall be, and make new nations : he shall flourish,  
And, like a mountain cedar, reach his branches  
To all the plains about him. Our children's children  
Shall see this, and bless heaven.

*King:*

Thou speakest wonders.

*Granmer:*

She shall be, to the happiness of England,  
An aged princess ; many days shall see her,  
And yet no day without a deed to crown it.  
Would I had known no more ! But she must die ;  
She must ; the saints must have her ; yet a virgin,  
A most unspotted lily shall she pass  
To the ground, and all the world shall mourn her.'

V. 5. 15-63.

Few passages in Shakespeare's works have aroused more discussion and conjectures. It is a generally accepted theory that the seventeen lines from 'Nor shall this peace sleep with her : ' to, and including, the King's exclamation, 'Thou speakest wonders,' are an addition to the prediction as it was originally penned. Sir Sidney Lee suggests:

'These seventeen lines, which pass from the praise of

Elizabeth to that of James I, were possibly interpolated after the piece was completed. They abound in obsequious compliments to the reigning sovereign and have very little relevance to the context.'

Dr. Johnson remarks:

'These lines, to the interruption by the King, seem to have been inserted at some revival of the play, after the accession of King James. If the passage (from "Nor shall this peace sleep with her" to "Our children's children shall see this and bless heaven") be left out, the speech of Cranmer proceeds in a regular tenour of prediction, and continuity of sentiments; but, by the interposition of the new lines, he first celebrates Elizabeth's successor, and then wishes he did not know that she was to die; first rejoices at the consequence, and then laments the cause. Our author was at once politick and idle; he resolved to flatter James, but neglected to reduce the whole speech to propriety; or perhaps intended that the lines inserted should be spoken in the action, and omitted in the publication, if any publication was ever in his thoughts.'

A further doubt arises as to whether the interpolation ended with the King's exclamation, or possibly included Cranmer's further eulogy of Elizabeth, finishing with 'and all the world shall mourn her.' Of the seventeen lines which relate to James, the first eleven never lose sight of Elizabeth. Her 'blessedness,' her 'honour,' her 'fame,' were to descend to her 'heir'. The extension of the dominion of England, under James,—the only passage in which 'the greatness of his name' is separated from that of Elizabeth,—occupies the remaining part of the prophecy; and that the thread which connects

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the whole with Elizabeth may not be dropped, even while those six lines are uttered, Cranmer returns to the close of her life, which in two-thirds of the previous seventeen lines he had constantly inferred:

‘She shall be, to the happiness of England,  
An aged princess, . . . .’

It is often contended that Ben Jonson was responsible for the additional lines referring to King James. There is not a word here about that sovereign’s personal qualities. The passage applies to the character of his government; its ‘peace, plenty, love, truth, terror,’ and the extension of its growth to ‘make new nations.’ Sir Sidney Lee says:

‘James was constantly said to have entered on his inheritance “not with an olive branch in his hand, but with a whole forest of olives round about him, for he brought not peace to this kingdom alone” but to all Europe.’

In the extravagant phraseology of such tributes, Queen Elizabeth is compared to Saba, the Queen of Sheba of Biblical renown, who bears this name in the Latin Vulgate, and was so known in the time of Shakespeare; also to ‘the maiden phoenix’, the fabulous bird without a mate, which according to the classical myth was consumed by fire at certain intervals that a new-created phoenix might rise from its ashes. This allusion to the Virgin Queen and her successor is not original. Sylvester’s Dedication of Du Bartas to King James (1605) likens Elizabeth and James to the phoenix; and Knollys’



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Dedication of his *History of the Turks* to Elizabeth (1603) calls her 'the rare Phoenix of her sex.'

The statement, 'God shall be truly known', refers to the firm establishment of the reformed and Protestant church during the Queen's reign. It appears certain that the lines:

'His honour and the greatness of his name,  
Shall be, and make new nations.'

allude to the colonisation of Virginia. The first charter was granted in 1605; and the colony was planted in 1607, in which year James Town was built. King James took special interest in the settlement, and an inscription on a contemporary portrait of the King, which belonged to Lord Bacon, and is now in the possession of the Earl of Verulam, styles him *imperii Atlantici conditor*.

Whether or no Shakespeare himself was the author or inspirer of the passage in tribute to James I, the Playwright had reason to be grateful to the King for personal kindnesses. James was an even greater patron of the drama than his predecessor; and when he ascended the throne, no author was more frequently honoured by 'command' performances of his plays in the presence of the sovereign than Shakespeare, who received many marks of royal favour.

## "HENRY VIII" ON THE STAGE

### CHAPTER XIV

#### "HENRY VIII" ON THE STAGE AFTER SHAKESPEARE'S TIME

THIS historical drama has had a great stage history, as great as any play associated with the name of Shakespeare. Its presentation has always been most popular with the public, and the characters of Henry VIII, Wolsey, and Queen Katharine are favourite Shakespearean rôles with leading actors and actresses. Chetwood records that during one season in the 18th century it was presented seventy-five times. Probably because of the spectacular coronation ceremony in the fourth Act, it was played forty times in succession in the year of the coronation of King George II, 1727—a remarkable record, considering the expense and lavishness of production involved.

Sir Sidney Lee says that *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth* was produced at the old Globe Theatre early in 1613. The probability that this was the play described by Sir Henry Wotton, during a presentation of which, on June 29th of that year, the Globe was burnt down, has already been discussed in a previous chapter.

Shakespeare was ruthlessly edited in stage versions during the 18th and early 19th centuries. His

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plays were abridged, amplified, and revised in a manner which entirely lost sight of the Author's original intentions. The extent to which liberties were taken with *Henry VIII* is revealed by the fact that the part of Gardiner was actually, it appears, often played by a low comedian at that period. Mr. Younger, the Prompter of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, in his edition of the play 'as performed at the Theatre Royal,' and 'regulated' by himself, published in 1773, comments very properly: 'Gardiner . . . should never be represented by a low comedian, as mostly happens, to make the galleries laugh, at the expense of all propriety.' The part of Griffith, Queen Katharine's faithful gentleman-usher, was blended with Cromwell's which, it was said, 'makes the latter more respectable; and, is indeed, for other reasons, better.'

It was customary to curtail considerably Scene 1 of the first Act. Younger excuses this by saying: 'as Shakspeare pen'd it, it must be terribly tedious on the stage, and not amusing in the closet.' Even the great trial scene suffered abbreviation. Speeches of the King and the Bishop of Lincoln were deleted, and, as the Theatre Royal Prompter remarks, after the Queen has left the chamber, 'there is a page of the original very properly left out here, no actor could have spoke, nor any audience have listened with patience to the whole of it.'

The same commentator also takes exception to the scene between the Porter and his man in Act V. Scene 4. This piece of coarse humour is typically Tudor and shocked the 18th century mind:

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'Here, we encounter a dreadful, low, quibbling, indecent scenc, of a porter, and his associates, resisting a mob,' says Younger. 'What an idea for a royal palace! We have ventured to offer something, in our idea, more decent, to give time for the royal christening, and we hope, not unjustifiably.'

Whereupon, a short scene between Lovell and Cromwell is introduced, composed in the Shakespearean manner, as a preliminary to the entrance of the procession to Grey Friars. The fifth Act was sometimes omitted altogether.

At one period, in the place of 'Orpheus with his lute' (III.1) a song set to music by Dr. Arne was substituted:

'Love's the tyrant of the heart,  
Full of mischief, full of woe;  
All its joys are mix'd with smart,  
Thorns beneath his roses grow;  
And, serpent-like, he stings the breast  
Where he is harbour'd and carress'd.'

A song, sung by Patience to an air of Handel, was also introduced in place of the 'Vision' in Queen Katharine's chamber at Kimbolton. Charles Kean in his production of the play restored the original version.

In a 1762 edition of *King Henry the Eighth. With the Coronation of Anne Bullen. Written by Shakespeare. With Alterations. As it is performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane*, a very elaborate order of procession for Anne Boleyn's coronation is given, in which nearly a hundred and forty performers

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are named. Following that is the Champion's procession in the Hall, with the Champion on horseback.

When John Kemble produced his revised version of the drama at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, in 1804, and revived it again in 1815, scenes were omitted or transposed to such an extent that it is difficult to follow the thread of Shakespeare's narrative. Anne Boleyn's coronation is left out entirely, as well as the strong scene between Queen Katharine and the two Cardinals. Kemble also permitted himself the privilege of altering certain lines in accordance with his own views of the dramatic. The Prologue and Epilogue are usually omitted in present-day stage productions, together with Scene 4 of Act V and the lines referring to James I in Cranmer's prophecy, which are of such doubtful authorship.

In early Stuart times, the part of the King was played by John Lowin, a partner with the successors of Shakespeare, Burbage, Heminge and Condell, in the ownership of the Blackfriars Theatre.

After the Restoration *Henry VIII* was one of the few of Shakespeare's dramas performed by the new companies. The piece was revived at the Duke's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields in the year 1662 or 1663 by Sir William Davenant with appropriate splendour. Joseph Harris was Wolsey, Betterton the King, and Mrs. Betterton, Queen Katharine. Davenant took great liberties with the text, and freely edited the great Dramatist's work.

Pepys, that inveterate theatre-goer, went to see this play at the Duke's Theatre. But he formed

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no great opinion of it, remarking that the production was "much cried up", and calling it "made up of patches, nothing but show." Nevertheless, it proved exceedingly popular.

Downes, the Prompter, in his *Dramatic Miscellanies*, speaks in the following rapturous terms of the manner in which the principal characters were then sustained:

'This play, by order of Sir William Davenant, was all new clothed in proper habits; the King's was new, and all the Lords', the Cardinals', the Bishops', the Doctors', Proctors', Lawycrs', and Tipstaves'—with new scenes. The part of the King was so right and justly done by Mr. Betterton, he being instructed in it by Sir William, who had it from Old Mr. Lowen (one of the earliest representatives of the character) that had his instructions from Mr. Shakespeare himself, that I dare and will aver, none can, or ever will, come near him on this age, in the performance of this part. Mr. Harris's performance of Cardinal Wolsey was little inferior to that, he doing it with such just state, port, and mien, that, I dare affirm, none hitherto has equalled.'

Langbaine, in his *Account of the English Dramatic Poets*, published twenty-five years later, says, "The play of Henry the Eighth frequently appears on the present stage, the part of Henry being extremely well acted by Mr. Betterton."

In 1707 *Henry VIII* was staged at the Haymarket Theatre, with Betterton as the King; Verbruggen, Wolsey; Mrs. Barry, the Queen; and Colley Cibber, Surrey.

Barton Booth was Betterton's successor as the

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great Shakespearean actor of his day and a fine King Henry VIII. Davies has nothing but praise, and states that:

'To support the dignity of the prince, and yet retain that vein of humour which pervades the character, requires much caution in the actor; without great care, Harry will be metamorphosed into a royal bully, or ridiculous buffoon, but Booth was particularly happy in preserving the true spirit of the part through the whole play.'

Booth's contemporary, Wilks, was a fine actor, too. He created his own Cardinal Wolsey. Till then the leading part in *Henry VIII* had been the King himself.

When this play was acted before George I at Hampton Court, about the year 1717, Wolsey's filching from his royal master the honour of extending pardon to those who had resisted payment of the 'exactions' appeared so gross and impudent a contrivance that the courtiers laughed loudly at such an example of ministerial craft. His Majesty, who was imperfectly acquainted with the English language asked the Lord Chamberlain the meaning of this mirth, and upon being informed of it, joined in a hearty laugh of approbation.

During the coronation performance of 1727 Booth was King Henry, Colley Cibber was now Wolsey, Wilks was Buckingham, and Queen Katharine was played by Mrs. Porter, evidently a fine actress, for Davies reports:

'The dignity and grace of the Queen was never, perhaps, more happily set off than by Mrs. Porter; there was an

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elevated consequence in the manner of that actress, which, since her time, I have in vain sought for in her successors. Her first speech to the king, after kneeling to him, was uttered with such intelligence and sensibility, that she commanded the applause as well as attention of the audience. The words are simple, and seemingly unimportant, but she understood her author well, and in delivering them, conveyed the prime duties of the kingly office with energy; her conduct, indeed, in the whole scene was a mixture of graceful elocution and dignified behaviour.'

Colley Cibber, Poet-Laureate, comedian, and theatrical manager, was a notable Cardinal Wolsey. In a 1758 edition of *Henry VIII*, 'By the author of the History of the Life and Times of Cardinal Wolsey,' dedicated to Cibber, the editor addresses him:

'The character drawn by Shakespeare of Cardinal Wolsey, in the following piece, you have acted with a free, open, benevolent, and a becoming dignity, natural to the innate disposition of that most illustrious Minister of State, which gained you high applause.'

Davies, however, is highly critical of Cibber's characterisation, and comments on the absurdities of some of the actions and 'business' introduced at this period. In Act III Wolsey says:

'This candle burns not clear; 'tis I must snuff it;  
Then out it goes.'

Davies remarks:

'The action of Colley Cibber, in speaking this passage, I have heard much commended: *he imitated with his fore-*



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*finger and thumb, the extinguishing of a candle with a pair of snuffers.* But, surely the reader will laugh at such mimicry, which, if practised, would make a player's action as ridiculous as a monkey's.'

Quin played the King both at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and noted Wolseys in their day were Mossop and Henderson.

In 1747 Garrick became joint patentee of Drury Lane, and set about the renovation of Shakespearean drama. He seized the opportunity offered by the coronation of George III in September, 1761, to revive Henry VIII, as had been the practice at previous coronations. But even his enthusiastic biographer, Davies, is constrained to admit that it was not a conspicuous success. His account of it is curious, and deserves to be quoted:

'The Coronation of their Majesties (he says) was followed by a stage-representation of it at both the playhouses, which had been a usual practice on such occasions, from the days of James the First to the present time. Mr. Garrick knew very well that Rich would spare no expense in the representation of this show; he knew, too, that he had a taste in the ordering, dressing, and setting out these pompous processions, superior to his own; he therefore was contented with reviving the coronation, with the old dresses which had been often occasionally used from 1727 to 1761. This show he repeated for forty nights successively, sometimes at the end of a play, and at other times after a farce. The exhibition was the meanest and the most unworthy of a theatre, I ever saw. The stage indeed was opened into Drury Lane, and a new and unexpected sight surprised the audience, of a real bonfire, with the populace huzzaing and

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drinking porter to the health of Queen Anne Bullen. The stage in the meantime, amidst the parading of dukes, duchesses, archbishops, peeresses, heralds, etc., was covered with a thick fog from the smoke of the fire, which served to hide the tawdry dresses of the processionalists. During this idle piece of mockery, the actors, being exposed to the suffocations of smoke, and the raw air from the open street, were seized with colds, rheumatism, and swelled faces. At length the indignation of the audience delivered the comedians from this wretched badge of nightly slavery, which gained nothing to the managers but disgrace and empty benches. Tired with the repeated insult of a show which had nothing to support it but gilt copper, and old rags, they fairly drove the exhibitors of it from the stage, by hooting and hissing, to the great joy of the whole theatre. It is difficult to guess the reason which induced a man of Mr. Garrick's understanding to pursue a losing game so long.'

Younger, the Prompter, gives a list of the players appearing in this piece both at Covent Garden and Drury Lane about the year 1773. Mr. Bransby played King Henry at Drury Lane, and Mr. Clarke at Covent Garden; Mr. Havard was Wolsey at the former theatre, and Mr. Bensley at the latter.

The greatest names associated with Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* did not appear on the play-bills until John Kemble assumed the management of Drury Lane in the Autumn of 1788, and produced his subsequent revivals, both at this theatre and later at Covent Garden, during the next twenty-five years. His first production of the play on November 25th, 1788, was an event memorable in the annals of the stage. His sister, the celebrated Mrs. Siddons, played the part of Katharine for the first time. As the

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unhappy Queen Mrs. Siddons almost excelled herself. It became her most famous and favourite rôle; and she appeared in a number of revivals until her retirement in 1812. In the year 1816 she performed Katharine once more at a benefit performance on behalf of her brother, Charles Kemble.

It was Dr. Johnson who recommended the character to her. There is Boswell's description of the great tragedienne's interview with the lexicographer:

'Having placed himself by her, he entered with great good humour, upon a consideration of the English Drama, and, among other enquiries, particularly asked her which of Shakespeare's characters she was most pleased with. Upon her answering that she thought that of Queen Katharine the most natural, "I think so, too, Madam, (said he) and whenever you perform it, I will once more hobble out to the theatre myself." Mrs. Siddons promised she would do herself the honour of acting his favourite part for him, but many circumstances happened to prevent the representation of "Henry the Eighth", during the Doctor's life.'

Mrs. Siddons' real dignity in this part was much applauded by others, and will always be associated with the name of the greatest actress of the 18th century. Hazlitt, in an unrestrained eulogy on her performance, wrote, 'she was Tragedy personified.' An enthusiastic poet penned the lines:

'With winning graces and majestic mien,  
She mov'd a goddess, and she look'd a queen.'

Her first entrance in the Council Chamber scene, while the King and Wolsey are questioning the Duke of Buckingham's accuser, was heralded by Sir

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Henry Guildford, calling from without, 'Room for the Queen.' She entered, her page bearing a cushion before her, which he placed for her to kneel to the King. A contemporary admirer wrote, 'The dignity of her figure, admirably dressed, the intelligence of her look, and the graceful composure of her gesture, have never been paralleled.' There is a legend of the theatre that by simply saying, 'You were the Duke's Surveyor, and lost your office on the complaint of the tenants,' she put the actor to whom the words were addressed into such a perspiring agony, that as he came off, crushed by her earnestness, he declared that he would not for the world meet her black eyes on the stage again.

But Mrs. Siddons' biographer, James Boaden, asserts that she rose to her greatest heights in the trial scene. 'There is,' he says,

'no hint in Shakespeare of any rising of Campeius when Queen Katharine utters the words "Lord Cardinal", and then the waving him aside for the other cardinal present, Wolsey—"To *you* I speak," and I do not know whether this double action and division of the address originated with Mrs. Siddons or not. I incline to think it did—for though it looked more in the *subtle* style of her brother's understanding, than, what I will call the more *manly* plainness of her own, yet the action with which it was accompanied, the sway and balance of the figure, offered a charm to the spectator . . .'

Boaden also pays tribute to Palmer's King Henry when he played opposite to Mrs. Siddons:

'I cannot omit to notice the very characteristic manner in which the *defender* of the faith and author of its *rejection*

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was performed by Palmer; his towering figure, fair complexion, and explosive manner, gave an absolute *fac simile* of Harry. He had enough of tragedy about him to keep his comedy from being ludicrous:—the importance of the King, and the awe which it inspired, have occasionally suffered in other hands.'

At first Kemble left Bensley in possession of his old rôle of Wolsey; and for the sake, it is said, of giving 'duteous and intelligent observance' to his sister in the heavier scenes, doubled the parts of Cromwell and Griffith. He had a great triumph himself as Wolsey at a later time, and also made a striking figure of the King, if not an accurate historical portrait. His brother Charles, described as one of the most graceful and refined of actors, played Cromwell.

Kemble made a good deal of the big spectacle scenes, Wolsey's banquet, the trial of Queen Katharine, and the christening of the Princess Elizabeth. The vision of Queen Katharine was 'cut', and Patience merely sang Handel's "Angels ever bright and fair" while the Queen slept.

In 1822 Edmund Kean appeared as Wolsey; and the character was nobly rendered by Macready at two performances given during the first year of his 1837-39 season at Covent Garden. Among the thirty-one of Shakespeare's thirty-seven dramas produced by Samuel Phelps during his management of Sadler's Wells Theatre from 1844 for more than eighteen years, *Henry VIII* was included. At Drury Lane on July 11th, 1848, Phelps played King Henry, and Macready, Cardinal Wolsey. Miss Kate

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Terry's name appears in the programme as one of the Ladies-in-Waiting to Queen Katharine.

A memorable production was Charles Kean's revival at the Princess's Theatre on May 16th, 1855. This was the occasion of Mrs. Charles Kean's return to the stage after nearly two years' absence due to severe illness. Charles Kean was Wolsey, and his wife was Queen Katharine. This was far the most ambitious presentation as to splendour of background and pageantry of action which had ever been attempted, and considerable trouble was taken that the scenery might be historically correct. The scene of the Old Palace Yard, Westminster, was copied from a drawing made by Antony van den Wynaerde, in 1543, and preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. That of the Council Chamber was a restoration of the painted chamber at Westminster, from Capon's drawing in *Vetusta Monumenta*. In the room in the Queen's apartment at Bridewell Palace a chimney-piece designed by Holbein for that palace was introduced, built up from a drawing of it in the British Museum. The Queen's chamber in Kimbolton Castle was hung with tapestry, in accordance with authentic fact. In the second scene of the last Act, Kean introduced his favourite device of a moving panorama representing London as it appeared in the reign of Henry VIII, with the barges of the Lord Mayor and City Council on their way to Greenwich to attend the christening of the Princess Elizabeth. The curtain then rose on a spectacular scene of pageantry in the church of the Grey Friars, restoring, as far as it was possible to

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conceive, the interior appearance of the edifice at the time. Charles Kean wrote in his Preface to his edition of the play as presented by him:

'In the revival of *Henry the Eighth*, under its present form, it will be perceived that I have ventured to differ from the stage arrangements of my predecessors. Although in their time fine scenic effects were produced, and much pagantry was displayed, the management did not attempt, nor did the public require, that scrupulous adherence to historical truth in costume, architecture, and the multiplied details of action, which modern taste demands.'

Kean's stage version omitted Scenes 2, 3, and parts of 4 of Act V, which included the impeachment of Cranmer by the members of the Council, the facetious exchange of witticisms on the crowd assembled for the christening by the Porter and his man, and the reference to James I in Cranmer's speech over the font. On the other hand, the vision of Queen Katharine, hitherto so often ignored, was restored, and other episodes of the play frequently cut were revived.

The production had an enormous success, and ran for 100 nights. Kean's biographer, Cole, points out that:

'In a single season the characters of Wolsey and the Queen were played by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean oftener than by their great predecessors during a career of thirty years.'

One of the most noteworthy revivals of later times was during Sir Henry Irving's management at the Lyceum Theatre. Irving staged his production of *Henry VIII* with a lavishness and spectacular splen-

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dour beyond anything he had ever attempted with regard to Shakespeare's plays. A long run began in January, 1892, with the great tragedian himself playing the Cardinal, and Ellen Terry as a moving Katharine. Violet Vanbrugh appeared in the part of Anne Boleyn; William Terriss was King Henry; and Forbes Robertson, Buckingham. This was again, however, only a fragmentary version of the piece. Just enough of the speeches of the Gentlemen in Act IV were preserved to bring in the coronation of Anne Boleyn; and in Act V only enough of Cranmer's speech of prophecy to allow for the gorgeous ceremony of the christening. All the matter pertaining to the conspiracy against Cranmer was omitted.

But if to the car Shakespeare's lines were severely curtailed, the most beautiful and elaborate staging delighted the eye. Mr. Seymour Lucas, A.R.A., and Mrs. Comyns Carr designed the brilliant costumes, while J. Harker, Hawes Craven and W. Telbin painted the fine scenery.

In the provinces and abroad *Henry VIII* has been a favourite. America's noble tragedian, Edwin Booth, was a superb Wolsey; and during Charles Calvert's notable series of Manchester revivals Miss Genevieve Ward rivalled Mrs. Siddons in her portrayal of Queen Katharine.

An important revival which enjoyed a long run was that of the late Sir Herbert Tree in September, 1910, at His Majesty's Theatre, at which Sir Edward German's well-known suite of Henry VIII dances was played. Subsequently, in 1916, Tree produced this historical spectacle-drama in America.



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Tree's production was mounted and staged with the famous actor-manager's usual dazzling sumptuousness and perfection of detail. Again the play was 'cut', and arranged in three Acts, omitting everything pertaining to the accusation against Cranmer and the christening of the Princess Elizabeth.

Sir Herbert himself played Wolsey, a picturesque figure in his crimson robes; Arthur Bourchier was King Henry, a remarkable resemblance to the famous Holbein portrait; Violet Vanbrugh made a tragic Katharine; and Laura Cowie a dark and roguish Anne Boleyn.

Of recent performances of *Henry VIII* two were especially notable. On July 5th, 1915, during the War, the play was presented by an "All Star" cast in aid of King George's Actors' Pension Fund; and in the post-war era Dame Sybil Thorndike achieved a great success in the part of Katharine during a run at the Empire Theatre in 1926.

*Henry VIII* is in the list of numerous Shakespearean plays produced by Sir Frank Benson, and occasionally figures in the programme at the Old Vic. But the expenditure required for the adequate staging of its show scenes, the banquet, the coronation and christening processions, contribute to the infrequency with which this great historical drama is revived at the present day.

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